

UC-NRLF



B 3 301 148

IN BIRDLAND

With Field Glass and Camera







THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA

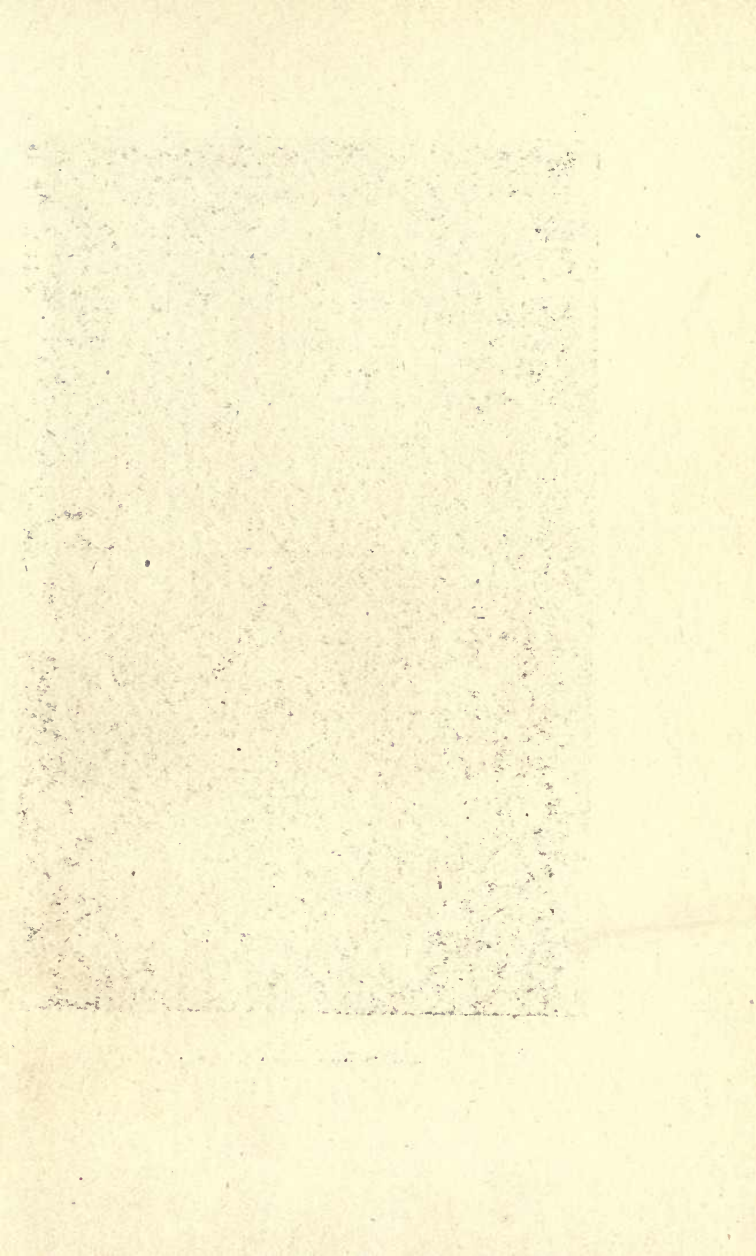
PRESENTED BY
PROF. CHARLES A. KOFOID AND
MRS. PRUDENCE W. KOFOID

IN BIRD-LAND WITH
FIELD-GLASS AND CAMERA

THE BRIGHTWEN SERIES.

Fully Illustrated. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s.

1. **Wild Nature Won by Kindness.** By Mrs. BRIGHTWEN, F.Z.S., F.E.S., *late Vice-President of the Selborne Society.* Illustrated. Twenty-Six Thousand.
2. **More About Wild Nature.** By Mrs. BRIGHTWEN. With Portrait of the Author, and many Illustrations. Eleventh Thousand.
3. **Inmates of my House and Garden.** By Mrs. BRIGHTWEN. With 32 Illustrations by THEO. CARRAS. Seventh Thousand.
4. **Glimpses into Plant Life: An Easy Guide to the Study of Botany.** By Mrs. BRIGHTWEN. Illustrated. Eighth Thousand.
5. **In Bird Land with Field-Glass and Camera.** By OLIVER G. PIKE. With over 80 Photographs of British Birds. Third Edition.
6. **Bird Life in Wild Wales.** By J. A. WALPOLE-BOND. With 60 Illustrations from Photographs by OLIVER G. PIKE. Second Impression.
7. **Quiet Hours with Nature.** By Mrs. BRIGHTWEN. With many Illustrations. Second Impression.
8. **Nature's Story of the Year.** By C. A. WITCHELL. Illustrated. Second Impression.
9. **Birds I Have Known.** By ARTHUR H. BEAVAN. Illustrated. Second Impression.
10. **Animals I Have Known.** By ARTHUR H. BEAVAN.





GARDEN-WARBLER AT HOME.

IN BIRD-LAND
WITH FIELD-GLASS
AND CAMERA ❧ ❧

BY
OLIVER G. PIKE

*ILLUSTRATED WITH 83 PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN DIRECT
FROM NATURE BY THE AUTHOR*

Third Popular Edition



LONDON AND LEIPSIC:
T. FISHER UNWIN

Birds

To

THE MEMORY

OF MY DEAR FRIEND

WALLACE WOODWARD.

K-QL676

P5

1902

Boul

Lib,

PREFACE

IT has been my aim in the following pages to describe some phases of the country as they really appear, more especially those relating to the habits of birds as I have observed them. The book thus consists of facts and impressions, accompanied with photographs of birds and their nests in their natural surroundings, all being taken during recreative rambles in Bird-land. Readers may, therefore, regard themselves for the time being as companions in these excursions.

To such lovers of Nature as would like to add a camera to the other charms of country walks, some hints and advice may not be out of place.

There are several kinds of birds-nesting. With the heartless egg-collector, or the professional agent, who takes all the eggs to be found, I have no sympathy. These destroyers do more to

exterminate our less common breeding birds than they themselves may have any idea of; otherwise, I think they would not do such injustice to the birds, as well as to those who derive pleasure from observing the habits of the feathered tribes. It is quite possible to enjoy the healthful pursuit of birds-nesting without in any way disturbing the birds' charming little homes, or causing the builders to desert their precious eggs. I prefer, when birds-nesting, to take a camera, and to photograph the nests, and so take away a lasting memorial which really gives more pleasure than mere possession of the eggs could ever yield.

For photographing nests, or birds while sitting, or feeding their young, I use a half-plate camera. A silent shutter is necessary, and mine is a Thornton-Pickard Time and Instantaneous pattern; I have fixed it inside the camera, attached to the front, with a thick padding of velvet between, which effectively deadens the slight noise which the shutter otherwise will make. If a shutter is used which makes noise enough to startle a bird, a very quick exposure is necessary; but if a silent one is used a slower exposure can be given, which in dull weather is a great advantage. Before I made this alteration, I failed to get many success-

ful photographs of birds in their nests, or of those feeding their young, as the slight noise of the shutter sufficed to make the timid creature raise its wings preparatory to flying away. I tried giving quicker exposures of $\frac{1}{60}$ or $\frac{1}{80}$ of a second, but this only increased the trouble, as more noise was made in working at a high speed. Now the difficulty has been overcome, an exposure of $\frac{1}{15}$ or $\frac{1}{20}$ of a second can be given and good results obtained, and also a more fully exposed and better photograph follows. All the photographs of birds appearing in this book, with one or two exceptions, have not had a quicker exposure than $\frac{1}{20}$ of a second. For birds flying, and some that are somewhat restless, such as Starlings when feeding, a much quicker exposure is necessary, and a focal-plane shutter is really essential.

Many little dodges have to be resorted to in order to overcome the disadvantages of shyness. Some birds tax our powers of resource and patience to the utmost ; others are so confiding as to allow one to approach with a camera without apparently taking offence, or even much notice at all. When desiring to photograph a shy bird on its nest, it is a good plan to place a heap of dried grass or rubbish some distance away, and then to move this nearer at intervals of several hours, or even

days in the case of some birds ; and then, when near enough, to hide the camera underneath, the operator being either concealed with the camera or remaining some distance off with the pneumatic tube connection. By this means a photograph can often be obtained even of the most timid birds ; although there are some which will still baffle all attempts to photograph them.

Another good plan, and one that I have found to work well in practice, is to place the camera well hidden under an improvised rubbish heap much nearer the nest than is really necessary, and to leave it there for several hours; then to move it farther away, until the nest is the required size on the focussing screen. It is really surprising how soon some birds will then return. But no set rules can be laid down, and it is as well for the photographer, if possible, to observe the habits of the birds he wishes to photograph, and any one having a thorough knowledge of their ways will be more successful than one who has not.

For taking occasional snap-shots of birds, I use what has been termed a gun-camera. This consists of a camera made on the "reflector" principle, fixed on a gun-stock. The bird one wishes to photograph can be seen and focussed up to the moment of exposure ; and for following restless

birds, this offers great advantages over ordinary cameras. Mr. R. B. Lodge, of Enfield, was the first to use a camera of this description, fitted with a tele-photo lens. To any one wishing to follow the new sport, as birds-nesting with a camera has been called, a gun-camera is a very useful acquisition, while it offers all the excitement of stalking a bird with a gun; the difference being that one's powers of woodcraft are taxed to the utmost, as a bird has to be approached much nearer than would be the case with an ordinary gun. The advantage of being able to focus the bird while the plate is in position, is of immense value in this kind of photography, and by using a tele-photo, or long focus lens some very good pictures of birds can be obtained. There are several makes of this class of camera in the market, and a reference to any of the catalogues of the chief photographic dealers should give information about them. The camera can easily be fitted to a gun-stock by any one with a little ingenuity.

I take this opportunity of thanking those gentlemen who have kindly allowed me to ramble over their lands in search of nests. I have also been especially indebted to two friends, Messrs. P. J. Hanson and W. Woodward, for very valuable

help rendered during our rambles in Bird-land, in discovering many of the nests, and for assistance given when photographing those built in positions difficult of access. I have to regret the death of my valued friend, Mr. W. Woodward, while this book is passing through the press. He was a keen naturalist, and one of the best of friends.

I shall be glad to hear from readers who find nests of our rarer birds; or are acquainted with districts attractive to a bird photographer, more especially in the London suburbs, or in Middlesex, Hertfordshire, and Essex. I should much appreciate the favour, if such friends would communicate with me with a view to additions being made to my photographs.

I may add that some of the anecdotes given in the first three parts were read before the members of the North London Natural History Society in a paper on "The Nesting Habits of Birds."

O. G. P.

WINCHMORE HILL, N.
March, 1900.

CONTENTS

PART I

THE WOODS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. NIGHTINGALE — FLYCATCHER — BLACKCAP— GARDEN-WARBLE—REDSTART	3
II. WILLOW-WREN — WOOD-WREN — CHIFFCHAFF —WOODPECKERS—WOOD-PIGEON — MAGPIE —TAWNY OWL	24
III. NIGHTJAR — TITMICE—TREE-CREEPER — HAW- FINCH—MISSEL-THRUSH	46

PART II

FIELDS AND HEDGEROWS

IV. MISSEL-THRUSH — WREN — SPARROW — PIPITS —BLACKBIRD—SONG-THRUSH— FIELDFARE —REDWING	69
V. WHEATEAR — STONECHAT—WHINCHAT — RED- BREAST—WHITETHROAT—HEDGE-SPARROW —SKY-LARK	93

CHAP.	PAGE
VI. KESTREL — SPARROW-HAWK — SWALLOW — MARTIN—SWIFT—ROOK	116
VII. CARRION-CROW — OWLS — SHRIKE — LAPWING —SNIPE—WOODCOCK	138

PART III

THE STREAM AND ITS BANKS

VIII. MOOR-HEN—YOUNG THRUSHES	159
IX. WILD DUCK — SCARLET GROSBEAK — KING- FISHER—DESTRUCTION OF BIRDS	176
X. HERON—TEAL — WAGTAILS — SEDGE-WARBLER —REED-BUNTING—LESSER WHITETHROAT —GREENFINCH—CHAFFINCH — GOLDCREST —BIRD-LAND IN WINTER	196

PART IV

SOME NORFOLK BIRDS

XI. THE BEARDED TIT	221
XII. BLACK-HEADED GULL — SEDGE-WARBLER — REED-WARBLER — GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER —REDSHANK—REED-BUNTING	235
XIII. GREAT BUSTARD — BITTERN — RUFF — MON- TAGU'S HARRIER—HEN-HARRIER—SHORT- EARED OWL	261

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE		PAGE
Garden - Warbler at home (<i>Frontispiece</i>)		Young Missel-Thrushes ..	76
Initial letter T	3	Young Sparrow	77
Nightingale's nest	10	Young Tree-Pipit	78
Nightingale sitting	14	Nest of Meadow-Pipit ..	80
Spotted Flycatcher sitting ..	16	Young Blackbird	82
Redstart's nest in an old kettle	22	Blackbird's nest	83
Nest of Willow-Wren	26	Nest of Song-Thrush	86
Willow-Wren sitting	28	Wheatear	94
• Nest of Wood-Wren	30	Young Whinchats in nest ..	98
Site of Green Woodpecker's nest	35	Redbreast	101
Site of Lesser Spotted Wood- pecker's nest	38	Robin's nest in an old bag	102
Wood-pigeon's nest	41	Robin's nest in a basket ..	104
Magpie's nest	43	Robin's nest on a folding chair	106
Nightjar's nest	47	Whitethroat at Home ..	108
Blue Tit	49	Whitethroat feeding young	110
Nest of Long-tailed Tit ..	51	Hedge-Sparrow's nest	111
Nest of Great Tit	54	Hedge-Sparrow feeding young	113
Young Great Tit	57	Sky-Lark's nest	114
Site of Marsh-Tit's nest ..	58	Sparrow-Hawk's nest ..	124
Nest of Hawfinch	60	Swallow's nest on the rafters of a barn	127
Missel-Thrush's nest	62	House-Martin's nest	128
Initial Letter I	69	Rooks at home	134
		Carriion-Crow's nest (<i>exterior</i>)	139
		Carriion-Crow's nest (<i>interior</i>)	142

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE		PAGE
Red-backed Shrike's nest ..	150	Bearded Tit feeding young ..	229
Lapwing's nest	152	Bearded Tit cleaning out	
Young Lapwing	154	nest	231
Initial letter A	159	Black-headed Gulls	237
Moor-hen's nest	164	Black-headed Gull's nest ..	238
Moor-hen's nest under roots		Black-headed Gulls sitting ..	241
of tree	167	Young Black-headed Gull ..	243
Moor-hen about to dive ..	171	Sedge-Warbler's nest	245
Young Thrushes	174	Sedge-Warbler sitting	247
Wild Duck sitting	178	Sedge-Warbler entering nest	248
Young Wild Ducks	180	Reed-Warbler's nest	250
Wild Duck hiding	181	Reed-Warbler's nest (<i>interior</i>)	252
Wild Duck's nest	184	Young Redshank	254
Herons at nest	198	Reed-Bunting's nest	256
Yellow Wagtail's nest	202	Reed-Bunting (<i>male</i>)	257
Young Lesser Whitethroat	205	Reed-Bunting sliding down	
Young Chaffinch	207	reed	259
Chaffinch's nest	210	Nest of Montagu's Harrier	265
Initial letter O	221	Young Short-eared Owl ..	271
Bearded Tit's nest	224	Short-eared Owl's nest ..	273

PART I

THE WOODS

CHAPTER I

NIGHTINGALE—FLYCATCHER—BLACKCAP—
GARDEN-WARBLER—REDSTART



THE Bird-land with which I am best and most agreeably acquainted is that of the woods and fields which surround my own home ; and it is chiefly from this picturesque neighbourhood that the majority of my photographs have been obtained.

That part of our country embracing North Middlesex and South Hertfordshire has been depicted as one of the most charming tracts of Old England. Charles Lamb, who thoroughly explored its fields, woods, and lanes, said that it was as good as Westmoreland.

I have not attempted to describe any of the great breeding-haunts of our sea-birds ; so that all which is given in this book will be found more specially to refer to inland breeding species.

The chapters which follow deal with the woods, fields, hedgerows, and the streams of the region mentioned, with all of which large numbers of holiday-keepers must be well acquainted ; but how few of those, who here find some sort of attraction in their healthful rambles, really know of the many beauties to be met with in these places. One needs a trained eye to take in only a part of what is to be seen and learned in the open country.

In the course of this work it has been my aim to picture various kinds of birds in their own homes as I have been privileged to see them. Their every-day habits, or what might even be called their own manners and customs in their own wonderfully interesting little world, are depicted as I have been enabled to observe them. The practically endless variation makes it no less

profitable than fascinating to gather one's facts, as far as possible, at first-hand from Nature herself.

Perhaps the most desirable place in which to study the ways of wild birds in their daily life is in the *Wood*. There was a time when the extended forests of these Islands were veritable paradises for birds ; in the main, from the beginning to the close of each succeeding century, they lived on undisturbed. Now, however, nearly all the woods in many parts are private property ; but nevertheless, on the borders of some of these delightful retreats is still found a public path, or, what is much better for a naturalist's purpose, a public footpath through the leafy enclosure.

A larger number and variety of birds is to be met with about such frequented paths than is the case in the more solitary depths of the wood. Perhaps one of the best places for observation is in the vicinity of a keeper's cottage. I noticed this particularly to be so one day after tramping with two companions through a large tract of the New Forest. Hardly a bird crossed our path during a good part of the day ; and being thirsty, we knocked at the door of a cottage nestling picturesquely among the trees. The good dame treated us very hospitably, gave us refreshments and allowed us to wander round her little garden in search of nests.

In a very short time we discovered one belonging to a Willow-Wren, while Tree-Creepers, Blue Tits, and a pair of Pied Wagtails were flying about with food in their beaks, showing that evidently they had their own nests near at hand. Long-tailed Tits were also busy round a thick bush, and many other birds were also to be seen. We seemed to have suddenly come into a paradise of the feathered singing tribes, after our tiring walk through the thick of the wood.

What struck me most forcibly, however, was the extreme tameness which had at once imparted charm to the cottage garden. The Tree-Creeper's nest was near the cottage door, where a large dog was chained to an adjacent tree, the birds inhabiting which, being in nowise incommoded by the dog's presence, for they continued to feed their young as unconcerned as though he was their chosen companion. A girl of or about three years of age, the wood-keeper's daughter, also stood near while we photographed these nests. This interesting child probably inherited her father's instinct, for she seemed to watch us very closely, as if to make sure that we took no eggs, and thus to enjoy the gratification of presenting a favourable report of such inquisitive intruders when she returned to her mother.

A larger total of birds will be seen in places like these in one hour than would be met with during a whole day in the heart of a wood, although in the more secluded spots there are birds to be seen such as Crows, Hawks, and other similar kinds. These love seclusion ; but it needs a very keen eye to detect them as they noiselessly rise from their nests.

One evening in the spring of 1899, I loitered for some time in a certain wood in order to discover whether the Nightingale had as yet arrived. Entering beneath the trees I walked a short distance, and then sat down on the stump of a tree that had just been felled.

On the right was the keeper's cottage some little distance down in the hollow. A large valley stretched for miles below, and beyond there was a chain of grey hills. The sun was sinking behind these latter, thus giving one a sight of one of those magnificent sunsets that may be sometimes seen in early spring.

All around there was a great chorus of bird-song, principally coming from Blackbirds and Thrushes ; it actually seemed as though there must be at least one in almost every tree ; no single song could be distinguished ; the concert was, as it were, a kind of melodious Babel, which

was still the sweetest possible harmony. I think I never heard such a chorus of avian music before ; there was a Thrush sitting on the topmost branch of a tree near, a ray from the sun setting off his spotted breast, and his throat could be seen expanding as he sang.

But as the sun slowly sank below the hills, one by one of these songsters broke off their notes. The sun was presently hid from view, and the golden clouds that marked his course were floating gradually away, meanwhile changing into a dark grey as they disappeared in the south ; the hills were cut out in sharp profile against the broad streak of yellow sky in the west ; but gradually this colour faded away and the hills seemed to become blended with the sky by a haze that hung over them. The birds had ceased singing, with the exception of a Thrush sitting near, and at last he also left his high perch to retire to rest in the bush beneath.

Stillness hovered over the whole woodland ; hardly a sound was to be heard with the exception of the sighing of the evening breeze as it rustled through the young leaves. Presently a slight noise below caused me to look down, when a field-mouse, tame because unconscious of danger, was sitting on its hind feet looking up with his

jet-black eyes, being apparently quite unable to understand why such an intruder as I should be there at all. Advancing cautiously he sniffed at my boots, looked up at me again, and then retired slowly, then stopped once more and took another glance, and finally leisurely entered the undergrowth.

Suddenly the woods echoed with a loud, wild cry, *kaarr*. A Carrion-Crow late in coming home to roost spied me below. The effect of his harsh note of alarm was instantaneous; a Blackbird near loudly uttered his rattling cry, which others at once answered; and birds roosting in the bushes were startled, as one realised by a loud rustling which was heard all round as they fluttered on their perches. These all soon once more settled down, however; and a White Owl flew overhead towards the valley, and then once more quietness reigned.

But at length the stillness was again broken, and this time the woods become melodious with other notes, the song of the Nightingale, whose beautiful, flute-like notes excelling in their charm all artificial music, seemed to hush all rival sounds until the woods and their inhabitants seemed to be according him their admiration. Singing softly, at first, as it were, being almost afraid of awaken-

ing the woods and its sleepers, his song gradually rose in volume until it was heard in full strength



NIGHTINGALE.

and beauty. I intended to try to put his song into words, but soon relinquished the attempt as impossible, being content to sit and listen, mean-

while realising how beautiful was night under such conditions. What mellowness and even pathos touched with melancholy he put into his notes! One was especially striking in its charm, this being the long-drawn whistle. Starting softly, the singer gradually rose to each note, about six in all, with perfect gradation of tone until he had reached the very height of artistic effect; then followed what some have termed the "bubbling" notes, these being followed by a few harsher ones, having in them but little music; but which still only tended to make the others to appear the more striking in their musical effect.

How different the song is to us at night when the woodland is free from other bird music, as compared to the same song when heard during the day! Then one has to get close to the Nightingale to hear to any advantage, owing to more humble rival warblers chattering and chirping to keep him company.

When in early youth I first heard the Nightingale I longed to see a bird which could give forth such music. I pictured the singer as being large and clothed in fine feathers, so that astonishment was excited when the nightingale of real life was pointed out. It seemed hard, indeed, to believe that so small a creature could sing so sweetly as

one had done only a few evenings before. Misgivings as regarded possible error were soon allayed, however, for the singer himself solved all doubts.

I seem to see the singer now as plainly as then ; we were standing beneath an oak, shaded from the rays of the hot sun, at the entrance to a large wood ; other warblers were singing also, but presently a song commenced just overhead which was at once recognised as the counterpart of that we had heard a few evenings previously. Looking upward there was the performer not more than two yards away, but his song lacked the great effect which night had seemed to add to it. Although we stood in silent admiration our entertainer sang on, apparently conscious that listeners were near ; and when we moved on we found that his song was at length drowned in the full chorus of other birds which abounded in the wood.

A frequently quoted passage and one of the most beautiful descriptions of this bird's song was written by old Izaak Walton : " But the Nightingale, another of my airy creatures, breathes such sweet, loud music out of her little instrumental throat, that it might make mankind to think miracles are not ceased. He that at midnight,

when the very labourer sleeps securely, should hear, as I have very often, the clear airs, the sweet descants, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and redoubling of her voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, Lord, what music hast Thou provided for the saints in heaven, when Thou affordest bad men such music on earth!"

Last autumn's fallen leaves, which have not rotted, have been driven by winter winds under the holly bushes or into dry ditches bordering the wood, and it is in such places that we may hopefully search for the Nightingale's nest. This so resembles the surroundings, being mainly composed of dead leaves, that it is always difficult to find, the eggs also being similar in colour to the nest. Hence, unless one sees the builder enter or leave her home, a long search may be fruitless.

A pair of Nightingales in Winchmore Hill Wood so far departed from their usual custom of building on the ground as to make their nest in an old kettle which lay in a ditch. Four eggs were laid and hatched, and, when discovered, the fully fledged young were content and comfortable in their somewhat unique home.

During migration, Nightingales seem to pursue an almost direct south to north passage; beyond

Devonshire and north of Yorkshire they are practically unknown, although stragglers sometimes are seen beyond those limits. In the parts



NIGHTINGALE SITTING.

over which they range they are fairly plentiful provided that woods abound.

The males precede the hens by about seven or

eight days, and I have heard country folks say, that during this period is the best time to hear him sing, because he is then expecting his *Nightingirl*.

When walking through the wood a little bird will often be met with sitting on a dead branch or on a fence; presently it flies a short distance, makes many evolutions in the air and returns to its perch. Time after time this performance is repeated, the performer always returning to the same place. The Spotted Flycatcher—that being its name—is a very interesting little fellow to take notice of, and there certainly could not be a better subject to photograph while sitting on its nest, taking little more notice of the camera than it would do of a tree or any other natural object.

I have placed my camera in front of the Flycatcher's nest, focussed it, and retired a few paces with the pneumatic tube, and the bird has presently returned. Going towards the camera to change the plate had very little effect beyond causing the hen to leave the nest for a branch just above, and then to return immediately I had left. Sometimes the bird will let you stroke her before she will leave the eggs.

The Flycatcher commences building almost at the date of arrival in this country, the same nesting site being chosen year after year. Not a bit shy in

habits it will often breed in ivy covering a house porch. When the young are able to fly, the parents



SPOTTED FLYCATCHER SITTING.

follow them about and watch them with close attention. To take notice how the parents bring food while the young are sitting in a row on a

branch is one of the prettiest of sights ; and the young creatures when they receive what is brought flutter their little wings in evident pleasure and satisfaction.

In a quiet spot where the wood is bordered by a stream, there is a number of thick bushes covered with woodbine, and bounded on one side by old oaks with ivy-covered branches, firs growing on the other side. It is in this sylvan spot that the Blackcap may be found each spring ; and while one stands on the stream bank he may occasionally be seen moving among the bushes. It is our good fortune sometimes to see him sitting on an exposed branch, and in full song ; but not often is he thus caught, for he loves to sing in the innermost recesses of the thick undergrowth.

Some lovers of Nature have said that they prefer the Blackcap's song to the Nightingale's, but I cannot say I agree with them, although the song of the former is very fine, the loud, pure, flute-like notes being both beautiful and striking in their wildness.

The nest is well concealed in a tangled mass of vegetation near the bottom of the bushes ; and if we know the exact spot where this is built, and move the branches carefully aside, the hen, or it may be the cock, will be found sitting on the eggs.

The bird's bright eyes, being like two jet black beads, are fixed intently on us; our eyes meet, but are turned aside for a moment, and this gives our little bird an opportunity to rise unobserved. Then presently a sound like *tek—tek—tek*, is heard behind, and looking back we see the hen asking us, as plainly as can be done in Blackcap language, to go away. Her mate, meanwhile, seeming to be less concerned, sings on from a bush hard by. After peeping into the nest, with its four well-marked eggs, we replace the branches and retire to another part of the wood, much to the satisfaction of the owners of the family home.

The Garden-Warbler's song might be mistaken for the Blackcap's; but the former may be known by not being so long in duration, and, although not lacking in richness, it is also a little quicker.

The Garden-Warbler has always been a favourite little wood-friend of mine, the chief reason I think being because it is so tame. Early on a May morning I was out with my camera, and came on a Garden-Warbler's nest in a gooseberry bush, the hen sitting on the eggs. As I wanted a photograph, I moved aside a branch in front, and this caused the bird to rise, apparently a little frightened. But if scared, this saucy little warbler did not show any

excitement ; she sat on the ground seemingly as interested in me as I was in her. The camera was soon in position, and putting my head under the cloth to focus the picture, what was my surprise to see that my little friend had arranged herself on a branch just above the nest, and was waiting for her portrait to be taken, but unfortunately a movement on my part caused her to return to the foot of the bush. The plate was soon in the camera, and she was again comfortably seated on the eggs, and I was able to expose the plate with the cap instead of the pneumatic release, although the lens was not more than eighteen inches from the bird. I regretted that I could not obtain a side view ; but she insisted on facing me, whatever might be the position in which the camera was placed. When the picture was taken I tried to touch the sitting bird, but she hopped away as soon as my hand was within one or two inches ; but no doubt if I had stayed longer, we should have been good friends in a very short time.

The Garden-Warbler is not always so tame, however, for many when once off their nest will not return until all danger is past. Numbers of these birds breed in orchards of the London suburbs, their songs making up a good natural concert when several get together.

A tragedy occurred to a family of Garden-Warblers last spring. They had, as usual, built in a gooseberry bush; the five eggs were laid, they were successfully hatched, and the young birds became clothed in feathers. One Sunday morning the mother, while chasing an insect among the thorns of the trees, had one of these pierce her throat. This faithful little parent just managed to get back to her nest to give her young the food collected at the cost of life, and then she fell dead and lay on the gooseberry branches beneath. Here she was discovered, with her mate calling plaintively from above in an apple tree. The little corpse was taken away and buried under some dry grass. While watching the nest from a spot a short distance away, it was seen that the male was continuing to feed the young, although every now and then calling *tack, tack*, for the mother which would never again return. I went to the nest some days later and was very pleased to see the young birds looking quite plump and healthy, and sitting just outside the nest. Their father still continued to feed them, bringing food about every three minutes, occasionally mounting to the tree above and singing loudly for a few moments as if highly satisfied with his thriving family.

I was told by a friend that he knew of a case of

a Garden-Warbler's nest, on being taken out of a bush, the hen remained sitting until lifted off.

The Redstart is as essential to the woods as the Kingfisher is to the stream; a wood without Redstarts would seem as though there was something wanting to make it perfectly in accord with Nature. In the northern suburbs we have a number of these pretty birds; and any one walking through the woods must notice them as they flit about near each pathway, dodging from tree to tree, always keeping in front, flying across one's footpath, sometimes settling on the ground, but always rising to go forward as we move.

These will well repay a little time spent in observing their habits. If we approach their nest the male will perch near us and keep up his alarm cry, *tu-i, tek-tek-tek, tu-i, tu-i, tek-tek*. This may readily be imitated by giving a short whistle, and then by knocking two small pebbles sharply together.

The male seems very much discomfited at our presence, flying from tree to tree, calling us to follow, which of course we decline to do, as we wish to see the nest, from which the hen has not yet flown. Suppose we search in the holes of this cluster of old beech trees hard by, as that probably is the place where the nest is concealed. Now the

whistle above is getting louder, and the *tek-tek* sounds sharper, so that it is pretty certain that we are quite near the nest. As we strike one of the trunks a bird flies out of a hole, and while she passes we catch sight of a trace of red over her tail;



REDSTART'S NEST IN AN OLD KETTLE.

otherwise she does not much resemble her handsome mate. On looking into the hole whence she has flown, we see one of the prettiest nests it is possible to find in the woods, the bright blue eggs making a charming picture against the dark back-

ground. But let us move on, because the hen and her partner are in a state of extreme excitement, the latter hardly knowing how to contain himself or whistle sharp enough. As we retire the hen remains behind quietly hopping about near the nest, but her mate shows us the way out of their domain, flying from tree to tree and calling us to follow, his scolding tone becoming less harsh the farther we get away.

Some very curious places are sometimes chosen as nesting sites by Redstarts; and the photograph shows one of these, the nest being built in a worn-out kettle, found near a farmhouse in the heart of the New Forest.

The Redstart usually arrives in the London suburbs about the second week in April, keeping to the open fields for a day or two, then retiring to the woods and gardens to breed.

CHAPTER II

WILLOW-WREN — WOOD-WREN — CHIFFCHAFF —
WOODPECKERS — WOOD-PIGEON — MAGPIE—
TAWNY OWL

WHILE standing under the beech trees in a wood in the month of May one cannot fail being struck with the merry song of the Willow-Wren. This little bird, as it moves from branch to branch searching for insects, singing meanwhile, gives one the impression that it is always in the best of moods. When a number assemble, and one song is taken up before another is finished, the concert resembles the chiming of small bells. The song which begins at a high-pitched note, gradually descends in an undulating scale ; sometimes each note is distinctly whistled, at other times the song is hurried over so that several notes are left out. It seems almost as though all depended upon what

state of excitement the bird is in at the time. When the male is singing over the nest in which the hen is sitting, and provided it is a bright day, the song is perfect throughout ; the bird seems to begin on a higher note than before, as if in his joy he cannot quite control his feelings ; but on a wet day, when apparently even a bird's spirits are damped, the song consists of only a few notes. I have tried to put this sweet song into words, and believe that the following, if whistled, starting on a high note and gradually descending, will give some idea of the original : *tu-i, tu-i, tu-i, tu, tu, tu, tui-i, tui-i, tu-o, tu-o, tuo-o, -uo-uo-uo.*

When Willow-Wrens first arrive in this country, numbers keep together, and a very merry party they are ; but, nevertheless, the males chase each other and fight valiantly for their mates. In the course of two or three days, however, pairing difficulties are overcome, and each couple betake themselves to their nesting site well satisfied ; and as soon as the thick undergrowth appears on the hedge-bank, or under the bushes, nidification is commenced. The nest being very skilfully concealed, is formed of dried grasses domed over with an entrance at the side, while the interior is said *always* to be lined with feathers, which does not seem to be strictly accurate. Thus, last spring I

found a nest with an interior of horsehair, underneath which there certainly were feathers, but only



WILLOW-WREN.

one or two, and these needed to be searched for to be seen.

The nest is approached sometimes by a short passage or tunnel in the grass; the one in the picture, showing the bird sitting, had one such over a foot in length, and was thus very difficult to find. I had noticed the birds round the spot during several days, and searched for the nest on three successive evenings without success. One afternoon, however, I remained hidden near the spot where I knew the nest must be, and watched the birds with a field-glass. For a long time the hen kept on hopping about in the hedge; then, at last, she came down into the grass and did not rise again. I quietly approached, and tried to rouse her, but when once she was settled, no noise or persuasion seemed likely to effect this; but when I beat the grass with a stick, she rose a full yard from where she first entered, disclosing the situation of the nest, which even then was very difficult to find owing to the thickness of the grass. There were four eggs, and she sat on these for several days without adding to them.

A few days afterwards I went to the nest with my camera, and as it was raining heavily I did not expect a very long delay in obtaining a picture; but in this I was mistaken, for it was not until about five o'clock that I was able to expose a plate. The bird flew to a dead branch near, and

from that on to the tall cow-parsnips that were growing thickly round, uttering every few seconds a short whistle *tu-i, tu-i*. Once she seemed in-



WILLOW-WREN SITTING.

clined to re-commence sitting, and entered the nest; but a Cuckoo flying just overhead caused her to hesitate, for she immediately flew after this supposed enemy, and settled on the top of a high tree not far off.

The Cuckoo cried *cook-hoo-hoo-oo*, and then finished up with a kind of laugh, *yuff-uff-uff*; to which the Willow-Wren answered with a few defiant notes and flew on to the next tree, where

she remained until the Cuckoo, which seemed extremely struck with the sight of the camera—being unable to see me—flew away. The Wren then returned, and almost immediately went into the nest, and I was able to expose three plates.

Where the Willow-Wren is common the Wood-Wren seems to be correspondingly scarce, and *vice versa*. At one place in the New Forest we met with several Wood-Wrens, while in Epping Forest the species is not so common as its congener. When once the locality of the nest is discovered the nest itself may easily be found by watching the movements of the hen bird. She flies and hops about in a small bush or tree over the nest, uttering repeatedly a short whistle which might resemble in sound *pe-o*, gradually getting nearer and nearer her nest until almost quite over the site; then she drops quickly to the ground, enters the nest, and the whistling ceases. When once the hen is thus settled it takes much to frighten her out again. The male has a curious shivering song, vibrating his wings and tail while giving forth what is difficult to repeat; but Mr. Howard Saunders, in his "Manual of British Birds," very aptly puts it down as *chit, chit, chit, chit, chitr, tr-tr-tr-tr-tr-tre*.

One of the surest signs of returning spring is the

presence of the Chiffchaff in the higher branches of the trees, its merry note *chi-ff, cha-ff; chi-ff,*



WOOD-WREN.

cha-ff, bringing back many memories of pleasant days spent in the woods during previous summers.

One of my most interesting wood rambles in still early spring was enjoyed before sunrise. The spot we wished to visit was some distance off, so that we had to be up while it was yet dark. Crossing two fields which were covered with white frost, we came to a winding lane which dipped into a deep valley, and at the end of this was another field to be crossed, and meanwhile the "swish" of walking in the wet grass roused several ground-roosting birds. These we heard and just caught sight of as they fluttered away, but we could not see what they were, though probably they may have been Larks.

Crawling through a hedge to cut off a corner we came in sight of the outskirts of our wood, showing dimly at the summit of a steep hill. At the top of this, while looking back, the clouds in the east showed their tinge of "russet-mantled morn," and this had been noticed by a Carrion-Crow, for he was calling loudly to all the land, and rudely broke the early morning stillness. Entering the wood a cock Pheasant called, and was soon answered by another roosting in a tree, and these flew away, making a great clattering as they crashed through the branches.

The ground was covered in places with beech leaves, the rustling caused by walking through

which aroused a flock of Wood-Pigeons from their sleep, and these at once whirled away in a circle, their wings making a considerable commotion. In the corner of the wood was seen the roosting-place of numbers of Starlings, which flew away in parties of thirty or forty, all loudly chattering in indignation at being so suddenly awakened.

The eastern horizon was rapidly becoming brighter, and a few snatches of a Thrush's song could be heard welcoming the sun's rising; the Missel-Thrushes were also early at work, and were calling and responding eagerly as we passed their nearly finished nests. A great chorus of cawing Rooks betokened that we were near a Rookery; a few pairs had already been seen flying towards their distant feeding-grounds. The instant we appeared underneath their nests a trusty sentinel gave a note of alarm, and the whole company—perhaps two hundred in all—rose in a body, the noise being deafening. Their loud cawing, combined with the rushing sound of their wings, made up a noise of interesting confusion; they circled round in ever-widening rings until they reached a great height, when they dispersed, some going to their feeding-grounds, while others returned to their nests.

Yet a few remained flying round and round

above, calling to their mates ; one or two dropped with lightning-like rapidity, when near their nests, just skimming by and rising again with outspread wings. One or two of more dishonest tendencies, were seen quietly appropriating sticks and material from their neighbours' nests in the absence of the owners, while on a few of the nests a sitting bird could be seen.

High up above the meadows a Sky-Lark was welcoming the rising sun with his matin song, while in the wood, Blackbirds and Thrushes were singing from the tree-tops and bushes. A little brown Wren was running along a fallen tree, but stopped just to join in the morning chorus, bowing meanwhile, with his little tail bobbing up and down between the notes. Afterwards he looked in all the nooks and crannies as if for a "make-believe" that he was very busy. There was the tree under which the Willow-Wren is wont to build its nest ; and the spot was lonely without its cheery song to send its echoes through the wood. It was here also that we nearly always heard its music in company with the Chiffchaff on or about the last day of March. Last spring it rained hard on the day we first heard this welcome Warbler, but notwithstanding we visited the wood for the purpose of finding out whether any Willow-Wrens had arrived. Soon

after entering the forest we heard some notes, but could not see anything of the singer, although we searched among dripping bushes all around which bore signs of returning spring.

In sheltered places the young bushes were breaking into leaf and beginning to show green ; above these in the taller trees a Sparrow-Hawk was searching for a suitable place for its nest ; a pair always building hereabout year after year. Along the hedgerows Robins were flitting about ; some probably had already got nests in the sheltered banks underneath ; a Blackbird's nest was ready for eggs, its owners calling *pick, pick*, as we passed ; Missel-Thrushes were everywhere busy building. Underneath the hedges arums were showing above-ground ; the wood-sorrel was here and there peeping through the dead beech leaves of the past season, which were still thickly strewn on the ground, while underneath a spreading oak a solitary wood-anemone with its snow-white blossoms and graceful leaves was seen ; its petals being closed hung down ; but when the sun breaks through the branches above, these elegant little flowers open and face the welcome and reviving rays.

Near a bush of butcher's broom, underneath an ancient oak was a number of Owl's pellets, evi-



SITE OF GREEN WOODPECKER'S NEST.

dently not long cast up. Green Woodpeckers were "laughing" all around, their loud *yaf-yaf-yaf-yaf-yaf* sounding in the distance uncommonly like the neighing of a horse. Occasionally we heard the loud tapping which they make while making their nesting-hole, and in many trees signs of their work were visible. This seemed to be the commonest Woodpecker in this forest, while in our woods nearer home, not a great distance off, the Great Spotted Woodpecker is the most abundant, one or two places I know of where it is almost common.

A pair always breed near my home, the tapping surely indicating the place where search may successfully be made. What a number of attempts this Woodpecker makes at boring a hole for its nest before it finally settles on a suitable tree! In an orchard north of London I have counted over a dozen holes in the surrounding trees, these ranging from half an inch to two or more inches in depth. When the one which the birds had finally chosen was finished, I placed my fingers in the hole, when the hen inside resented such intrusion into her home by promptly seizing hold of my little finger; she held on tightly until I gently withdrew my hand, but even then was determined to hold on if

possible. I was able eventually to catch her with my other hand, although she still held my finger in her beak, which at length a friend gently opened and so released me. We carefully examined this bird, and then let her go, and very pleased she was to get away. There was one egg in the nest which we were able to prove by touching it with a thin twig.

Two days afterwards, in passing by this nest again, I was puzzled on finding that the one egg had gone, although the bird was still in possession. A sharp shower of rain led to my taking shelter beneath a neighbouring tree, and while there I was further surprised to see the Woodpecker's egg lying near my feet, and with a good-sized hole in the shell probably caused by the bird's own beak. At first I could not understand how this egg had come there; but on examining the depth of the nesting-hole I found it to be nearly two inches deeper than when first examined. The bird had no doubt thought that we wanted her eggs, and had thus deepened the nest, whereon finding that the one egg very much hindered the work, removed it.

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker is very scarce in our woods, and previous to last year only one had been seen in them in my memory, and this

was shot by a boy with a catapult. Last spring I was passing a pollard willow on the banks of a



SITE OF LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER'S NEST.

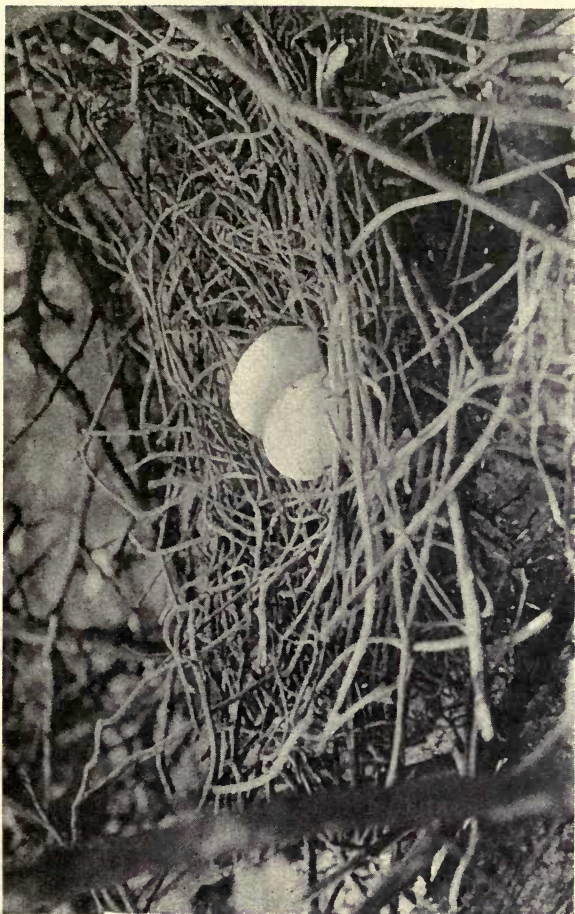
stream, when I heard a tapping, and although no bird was visible a number of chips on the water beneath led to my guessing that there must be a

Woodpecker at work. At length I saw that on a dead bough was a small hole, and through a field-glass it was seen that a small bird was moving about within. This wary little creature put out its head to remove some chips with its beak, but she was very startled at seeing an intruder. I recognised her at once as a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, and was agreeably surprised at seeing her there ; while on her part she watched intently, and seemed almost as interested in me as I was in her. How long we might thus have looked at each other I do not know had not my arm ached while holding up the field-glass. I was compelled to stop my gazing, and this movement broke the spell, the Woodpecker left the hole, and settled in a tree near at hand. As I had my camera I focussed the hole, and retired some distance with the pneumatic tube, thinking I might get a picture of one of the birds. They both soon returned, one running about the branches above, while the other perched on a branch lower down, surveyed the camera for the rest of the afternoon, or until it was too dark to expose the plate. This is the first nest that I have heard of in my own district, but hope it may not be the last.

The Wood-Pigeon is to be met with in our woods, but not in very great numbers, although

during one autumn, about eight years ago, we had a small wood so besieged by them that the roar and *clap, clap, clap*, of their wings, as they rose in a body, was something to be remembered, very much resembling a large forest tree falling and crashing through the branches of its neighbours. Great numbers were shot by farm labourers and, in point of fact, by anybody who owned or who could borrow a gun. The Wood-Pigeon is not a bird to stay in a wood where such slaughter goes on, and they very soon took their departure to other and safer retreats. I admire the Pigeon on this account ; and if other birds, as soon as they found their numbers being reduced in a similar way, were to go to fresh districts, those parts where they were protected would soon become a veritable birds' paradise.

Although so plainly constructed, the nest is a remarkably pretty one when furnished with its two white eggs. It is a pleasant sight to watch the hen sitting on these with her mate on a branch close at hand, erecting his feathers and puffing himself out as though he were the most important personage in Bird-land. Every now and then he approaches the nest, bows many times to his mate, then uxoriously rubs his little head on her wings and back. The fond hen returns this sweet affec-



WOOD-PIGEON.

tion by shaking her wings and tail, bending her head low and cooing softly *coo-co-coo*, *coo-coo*, *coo-coo-coo*; then her mate answers, beginning in a slightly higher pitch, and continuing bowing to her; and so this charmingly suggestive little love scene goes on until the hen leaves the nest, and her mate takes his place on the eggs in her absence.

The Magpie used to be common in our woods and orchards, but it is now, alas! almost extinct in this district. One pair used to nest regularly in a wood near my own home, and one nest through being repaired, and consequently enlarged in each successive spring, grew to quite a formidable size; but this—the last remaining specimen—was at last destroyed, the tree being cut down by the owner of the wood, when the birds were afterwards shot.

I well remember, when quite a little child, going to the window each morning to watch these handsome birds as they then fed in the little-frequented roadway outside, and it was then my ambition to catch one alive. Being only some five years of age, however, at that time, the birds were much more wary than I, and consequently were in no danger of being caught.

Most of the keepers on the several estates in the northern London suburbs seem to keep up con-

tinuous war against any Hawks or Owls which show themselves in their woods. I have found



MAGPIE.

that it is of no avail to remonstrate with these men, nor to explain to them the evil of killing off such useful birds in such a way; they regard

such creatures as only fit for nailing up in their "museum," and thus laugh at any one who tries to prove that they really do good by destroying hosts of rats and mice. There are said to be intelligent and more humane keepers who are beginning to see the folly of such wholesale slaughter, but I have never myself met with one of this mettle. Two years ago the Tawny Owl might at times be heard in our suburban woods; but a certain keeper on an estate near cleared them off with that brutal instrument of torture, the pole trap, in that way catching as many as fifteen in a few months. It was no wonder therefore that the familiar cry of the Tawny Owl, *whoo-whoo, hoo-e-oo*, was for a time no more to be heard in the fields and woodlands of the district referred to. During the present spring (1900), however, some more of these Owls have appeared to enliven the countryside with their cries.

I have, at different times, carefully examined pellets cast up by the Tawny Owl, but have never seen any remains of birds in them. Last spring, however, a young chicken was found in a hole in a tree near an Owl's nest, the hole being probably thus used as a larder, for on the next day the remains had gone. Noticing a number of pellets under the tree I looked up to see if the Owl was

above, and presently caught sight of her looking down first with one eye, then with the other; gazing thus for a short time, she slowly shuffled along the branch, then lazily flew away to a more sheltered part of the tree.

At dusk this Owl sallied forth with its mate and several young ones, the latter being settled on the branches of a large tree while the parents went forth in search of food. When it became too dark for observations we heard the young Owls calling *kee-wick, kee-wick*; and occasionally one of the old birds could be seen outlined against the sky as it returned with food for the expectant brood. I have for long had the impression that Tawny Owls subsist partly on fish, as I have often heard them in the vicinity of water; and oftentimes on a spring night when the young were out, they could be heard calling from trees overhanging a stream.

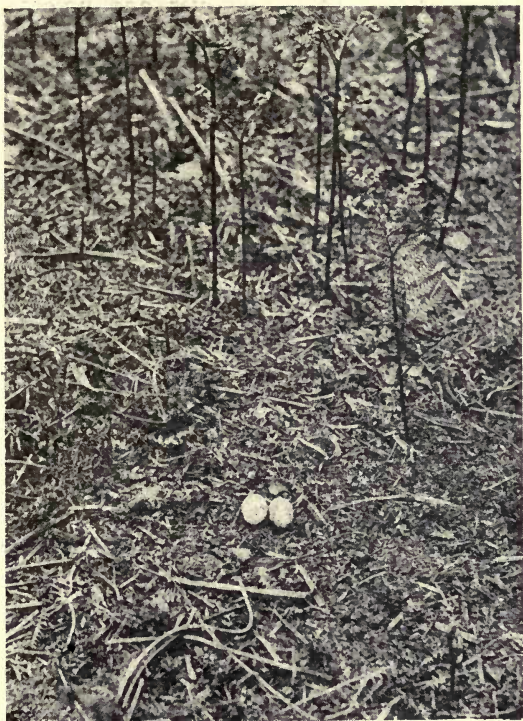
CHAPTER III

NIGHTJAR — TITMICE — TREE-CREEPER — HAW-
FINCH—MISSEL-THRUSH

ONE of the features of our suburban woods in late spring used to be the "churring" of the Nightjars in the evening and during the night. Many people would go to listen and to watch these birds as they flitted about like great moths over the footpath. The more ignorant of the common people, who passed while the performance was in progress, would wonder what it all meant ; and one man, evidently not liking the unusual noise, hurried with his wife from the scene, while ominously muttering, "Nasty things ; come away !"

The keeper of one wood shot several of these interesting visitors, the result being that for the last two seasons we have not had a single Nightjar to entertain us. The "churring" or "reeling" has

ceased, and through being greeted with powder and shot these birds which added charm to the



NIGHTJAR.

wood, have been driven away to more profitable quarters.

The two eggs, laid on the ground among the

bracken without any kind of nest, very much resemble their surroundings ; but when sitting, the hen is very difficult to discover, and unless one can catch sight of her large black, bright eye we may easily pass her by unobserved. Some sit very close, others when approached feign lameness or a broken wing, dragging themselves along the ground but keeping in advance of the intruder. This clever ruse, inspired by instinct, answers well in the case of a dog, but of course to experienced egg-collectors the bird unwittingly betrays the locality of her nest.

There are great numbers of Titmice in our suburban woods, including five different species. The Blue Titmouse is by far the commonest, being especially so during winter months, when they go about in parties, and in company with the Golden-crested Wrens, Long-tailed Titmice, and Tree-Creepers. In the orchards they "work" the trees very methodically, starting at the beginning of a row and going on to the end ; then they return down the next row.

The Blue Titmouse looks like an inoffensive little fellow enough when in this industrious company, but when seen under other circumstances no bird more spiteful could be found. In a tree near our garden some one once set a trap baited with

fat for the purpose of catching birds, and in due time two Blue Titmice came, one of which at once flew to the bait, with the result that it was soon a prisoner: While this captive was struggling to get free the other Titmouse uttered a cry, not of grief but of exultation ; it then pounced on to its com-



BLUE TIT.

panion and vigorously pecked at his head until it was actually able to eat the brains of the trapped bird ; and then, as though that were not enough, it also ate the fat which was the cause of the other's disaster. The trap having already closed, this little criminal or bird-murderer went off free

Skeletons of birds are sometimes seen lying about in the fields, and often, on examining these, the skull will be seen to have a hole in it, which shows that other Titmice of a disposition similar to that referred to have been at their deadly work. I once saw one biting leaves off a fruit tree as it hopped about the branches, not taking any more notice of them after they had fallen. I examined some of these, and each one had signs of having enclosed a small grub.

Of these five species of Titmice two very seldom leave the woods to go near inhabited dwellings. The Long-tailed and Marsh-Titmice seem to like the seclusion of wild Nature; the latter is seldom seen in company of other birds, while the former goes about in small family parties, and these fly in single file from tree to tree with a dipping motion, the effect being somewhat striking. Their call, while thus travelling, is very much like the Golden-crested Wren's, and might be given as *zee, zee, zee*.

In thick bushes, in woods, and hedgerows the Long-tailed Titmouse builds its nest, this being probably without exception the most beautiful of British birds' nests. The compactness, combined with the skilful arrangement of the lichens on the exterior, is wonderful indeed, when one considers the tiny beak that formed these into such artistic

shape. We marvel at the ingenuity which comes of instinct in the case of these feathered architects.



NEST OF LONG-TAILED TIT.

It is an exceedingly pretty sight when several of these young Titmice are perched on a branch

while their parents are away searching for supplies ; for they busy themselves by preening their feathers and by putting themselves into all sorts of grotesque positions. Occasionally one will overbalance, twisting round on the branch, but soon again flutters into a sitting posture ; then "mother" calls *zee, zee, zee*, from a fir-tree hard by, and all the others give attention. Then as the mother bird flies towards them they flutter their half-fledged wings in excitement ; one more impatient than the rest makes an attempt to meet her, but finding that it cannot yet fly well enough settles lower down in the bush. Then the other parent bird approaches from another direction to join its mate, and each in turn gives an insect, the young Titmice showing their pleasure by the slight movement of their wings. This being done, away go the parent Titmice once more for further supplies, and to return in a short time. Presently they will induce their young to follow into the thick of the wood. I once saw all this take place, and regretted that I had not my camera, as the young allowed me to get quite near to them without showing signs of fear.

Round about our garden last spring we had eight different species of birds breed, viz. : Whitethroat. Garden-Warbler, Hedge-Sparrow, Wren, Great

Titmouse, House-Martin, Starling, and Sparrow. All of their nests were within a very few yards of the house, and considering that we had three cats wandering about, it spoke well for their behaviour when all the young birds were successfully reared with the exception of a few sparrows which tumbled out of their nests in the ivy. I think these were perhaps the innocent cause of other nests being preserved, as two of the cats would sit under the ivy during the main part of the day gazing up and waiting for the next young sparrow to fall. They grew exceedingly fat on such diet, and their frequent meals did not seem to diminish the number of birds above.

As for the other cat, he was too lazy even to look up at the feathered colony, but would lay at full length in the sun day after day immediately underneath a Hedge-Sparrow's nest. I often watched the two occupants searching for food on the ground within a few inches of this cat's nose, not showing the least fear, a movement of his paws or tail only causing them to get a little farther away. Tiger, as we call him, would sometimes half open his large sleepy eyes and utter a plaintive *mew*, as though asking the birds to come closer, this being the only effort he made to catch them.

In several works on birds, the authors are very hard on poor pussy, and mention many terrible



GREAT TIT.

things they would like to inflict on the tribe ; but I must say I have a liking for cats, and so cannot help speaking a good word for them as well as for

their prey the birds. Tiger, for example, has accompanied me on many an interesting walk in suburban fields. But still my favourite cats are not everything that is desirable ; for one has brought home a rabbit, and on another occasion I found Tiger comfortably asleep in a large basket with a strong wire noose round his neck, and about a yard of wire entangled about his body, attached to which was a piece of thick string which showed marks of having been bitten through. This showed what he had been doing : while following a rabbit in the wood he had been caught in the trap that had been set for such prey as he was himself in search of. "Be sure your sins will find you out" is well applied to humanity, but whether my favourite pussy had a knowledge of wrong-doing I cannot say ; he certainly did not show any signs of having any conscience, as he seemed to think it a trial to be roused even to be relieved of the noose he had brought home. It certainly showed some tact or skill when he released himself in the way he did.

A pair of Great Titmice built their nest not far from that of the Hedge-Sparrow, and reared quite a large family. Building commenced on April 23rd ; on May 10th there were ten eggs ; and on the 21st of the same month some of the young were hatched. During the first day one of the parents

would remain in the nest while the other would bring food, but afterwards they would both go away together to bring back insects for their brood at very brief intervals throughout the day. On June 8th the ten young left the nest, and I was fortunate enough to obtain several photographs of them. The young of some birds return to their nest to roost, and I wished to see whether these did so, but after they took their departure they did not return to the vicinity of their first home.

The nest of the Great Titmouse was no easy matter to photograph, as it was placed ten feet from the ground in a tree stump; but by fastening two tripods together, and then putting some pieces of wood on the lower one, a stand for the camera of sufficient height was constructed. Even then, however, the difficulty of focussing was considerable; but this was at last overcome by placing a ladder securely in a slanting direction, so forming a standing-place for the operator. The tripod being very rickety, it was some time before the right position could be arranged. When all was focussed, and the plate was in position, the camera "wobbled" so much that we feared it would be impossible to take a satisfactory photograph; but after coming down to *terra firma* and waiting for some minutes for the sun to rise—it was early

morning at the time—the camera was found to have become steady, and I think that the accompanying photograph well repaid our pains.

The Marsh-Titmouse builds in a hole in a tree, very often excavating this for itself after the



YOUNG GREAT TIT.

manner of the Woodpeckers. These are usually in pollard willows growing on the banks of a stream. I know of a decayed willow stump in the corner of a field where a pair of Marsh-Titmice have built as long as I can remember, a fresh hole being made nearly every year, the tree

being almost riddled with them in consequence. The nest is warmly lined, usually with rabbit's fur,



SITE OF MARSH-TIT'S NEST.

but when this is unobtainable the down of the willow is used.

Following the parties of Titmice which haunt

the woods during the autumn and winter months, will often be seen the Tree-Creeper. Starting at the foot of a tree it runs up with jerks, uttering every now and then a plaintive *seens*; keeping to the main branch it works up to the top, then flies to the foot of the next. I have followed one the whole length of a long row of orchard trees, and only one or two of these were missed by this persevering little worker. When the last tree was reached, it flew to the next row and commenced working back again in the same order.

When a tree is struck by lightning and not destroyed, a large piece of bark is sometimes slit down, and in time this gradually parts from the tree to some extent. In the opening so formed, the Tree-Creeper's nest will often be found, a compact little structure composed of strips of bark and warmly lined with finer materials. In the New Forest we found one between a tree and a haystack, the latter being built close to the tree, and the nest was nothing like so neat as some I have seen nearer home.

There are some birds that seem to be becoming scarcer each year in our suburban district, while others seem to be taking their places and gradually extending their range in the surrounding country. One of the latter is the Hawfinch; a few years

ago one was very seldom seen, but now they have taken to breeding in our woods and orchards, and their curious note may sometimes be heard in the thickest part of the wooded grounds. Where several pairs are in a district they build in small



HAWFINCH.

colonies, the nests being within a few trees of each other, but not as close together as those of the Greenfinch are sometimes found. The beak of the Hawfinch gives one the impression of being of great power, as indeed is needful to crush the cherry and other kernels on which they sometimes feed.

In Epping Forest, where more protection is given to all birds than formerly, this species is increasing in number, and in one small copse I have seen several pairs in the topmost branches feeding on holly-berries.

Long before the young leaves appear, the Missel-Thrush commences to build, some of the early breeders having eggs in February. The nest is placed in a very exposed position as a rule, on the horizontal branch of a tall tree, or in the fork of a smaller one in an orchard, as was the case with the one shown in my illustration. Lichens are used by some birds to make their nest correspond with its surroundings, while others make a very untidy structure. In one part of Epping Forest numbers of these birds breed, and in one afternoon while walking there with a friend, we counted over a dozen nests.

The Missel-Thrush is of a very pugnacious disposition during the period of incubation. Jackdaws will often try to take the eggs, no doubt through the nest being in an exposed situation. I once witnessed an interesting fight between three Jackdaws and a pair of Missel-Thrushes which were defending their own. While one Jackdaw tried to steal an egg the others engaged the Thrushes, but these were determined to keep the enemy at

bay, and attacked them with great violence. For long the battle continued, first one side and then



MISSEL-THUSH.

the other gaining some advantage, most unearthly sounds—notes of defiance—being heard mean-

while ; the Thrushes uttering their harsh screams, while the Jackdaws responded with genuine unmusical ardour as became birds-of-war. At last, making an extra furious onslaught, the Thrushes gained the advantage and inflicted severe punishment on the aggressive enemy, the defeated Jackdaws appearing to be very dejected as they retreated to the chimney-pots of a house. Judging by the seeming conversation which was held by the vanquished foe, they were no doubt discussing the advisability of getting out of the neighbourhood, as the Thrushes, from their still loud and defiant cries, seemed likely to renew the attack with still more disagreeable consequences following.

The woods in autumn always present a grand spectacle. This year (1899) the leaves remain longer than usual on the trees, and only very gradually change to their rosy tints. To see the woods to advantage at such a time one needs to be on rising ground, so as to be able to look down upon them when the morning sun lights up their many fine colours. Each tree has its own characteristic tint—yellow, red, &c.—and no two trees are quite alike. Numbers of evergreens, and occasionally a silvery trunk gleams in the sunlight, all helping to harmonise the whole scene. A few

Swallows will flutter gaily overhead, while Wood-Pigeons fly to the oaks. In the wood itself stillness reigns supreme. A cock Pheasant strutting about runs to shelter, when it sees an intruder, and startles a Blackbird as he pushes through the bushes soon to be lost to sight.

Under the beeches the undergrowth is very scant. In winter these open spaces will be thickly covered with leaves from the taller trees, but the young beeches retain their leaves until the following spring. In other places the ground is covered with brambles bearing a crop of large ripe blackberries. Although some leaves of the bramble remain green throughout the winter months, others turn to the most lovely tints ranging from yellow to the deepest crimson. Playing among the larger branches of the oaks are many squirrels ; and as we approach, some of them will run up among the slender branches and jump from tree to tree, others lay full length on the upper boughs and remain still until we pass.

Perhaps the most beautiful of all the forest trees at this time is the horse-chestnut, the large crinkled leaves being tinted with most striking colours. When several trees are together forming a small grove the scene is truly one of autumnal grandeur, some of the leaves being a deep russet, others a

fine bronze, such as this noble tree alone can put on in the fall of the year. For some reason the birds do not seem to build in the branches of chestnuts so frequently as they do in other trees. It is seldom that one sees an old nest in a chestnut when the branches are bare. Deer love to rest in their shade during summer days, however, and they may often be seen lying down in such a sylvan grove during the heat of the day.

Long-tailed Titmice and Goldcrests are seen flying about in small parties, and the Tree-Creeper is patiently working up some of the slender trees. The Blue Titmice knock off many leaves in their search for insects, and these float down in the still air to settle at our feet. Although these are some of the most beautiful things it is possible to find in the woods, they will soon decay when the showers and the heavy morning dew soaks them through. When we leave the wood at evening the setting sun is like a great yellow ball, and the trees of the wood are lightened up to show brighter tints as the rays fall upon the leaves. The cumulus clouds floating before the sun now turn to a deep yellow with the deepest copper linings, looking as though edged with fire. Long rays move across the sky as the clouds pass, and when the sun sinks lower and vanishes from sight, all these colours

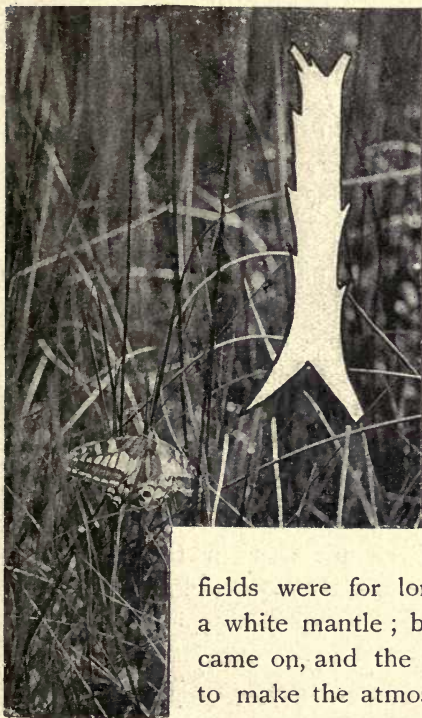
change to a deep red, this being reflected on all the clouds in the heavens. Small parties of cawing Rooks fly across the western sky on their way homeward; the Hedge-Sparrows call from the hedgerows; talkative Starlings in the fir-trees have quieted down; a thick mist rises over the low-lying meadows; and then all is still as an autumn eventide.

PART II

FIELDS AND HEDGEROWS

CHAPTER IV

MISSEL-THRUSH — WREN — SPARROW — PIPITS—
BLACKBIRD — SONG-THRUSH — FIELDFARE —
REDWING



N sheltered spots, under hedges or otherwise along the woodside, where in the dead time of the year the sun shines only for a short space each day, snow still lingers. Some time ago the

fields were for long covered with a white mantle ; but as the spring came on, and the sun rose higher to make the atmosphere some de-

grees warmer, snow and ice melted, leaving only a few patches where it had drifted. In the shadow of high oaks a patch still remains showing the tracks of rabbits as well as many footmarks of searching Rooks. Wherever the snow lies the beautiful whiteness has disappeared; in places it has been scratched away, showing numbers of dead oak leaves and some fine earth over the surface—the signs that some hungry bird or animal has been searching for food.

But now that one can hear a Sky-Lark singing above, we forget winter with its hardships, and look forward with new hopes to spring and summer, which to a roving naturalist must naturally be the most enjoyable time of the year, although winter itself is full of studies not to be despised. Just before sunset, little swarms of humming gnats, as demonstrative harbingers of spring, are to be seen flying in warm, sheltered places. The Missel-Thrushes are already busy looking out for eligible nesting sites, and in course of a few days all of these will be busily engaged in building. They are now in that condition of healthy and interesting excitement which precedes their most important enterprise in life.

A few days more pass and spring seems actually to have come; for by a hedgerow is found a

primrose—the first blossom and, as it seems to some, the best of our British wild flowers. Underneath an elder tree there is a solitary plant covered with bright yellow flowers—the lesser celandine. For years successively this little plant has been here, and when the grass grows high enough to hide it, a pair of Blackbirds always build in the bush above ; and once a Chaffinch tried to rear its young but did not succeed, the eggs being always taken.

But a sure sign that the inspiring season of the year has come, is seen in the hedgerow where a pair of Hedge-Sparrows are gathering twigs and grasses to carry these materials into a thick bush—the well-chosen site for their nest. When this—one of the prettiest of the nests to be found in a common hedgerow—is finished, and is furnished with its bright blue eggs, spring has really come down on our favoured plains. When we go forth in the morning and see that the hedges are already displaying a full green tint ; while the higher trees, although not yet green, are showing a red tint, the young buds being not yet opened ; and when the branches of these trees contain merry Willow-Wrens and Chiffchaffs, we begin to realise that the fullest promises of summer are to be seen on every hand.

In the evenings the Bats now turn out, the Great Bat flying high and straight, and only occasionally swerving from his direct course to snap at a moth, and every now and then giving forth a shrill squeak. Lower down, around the farmhouse and its buildings, the Common Bat is dodging hither and thither. When it becomes too dark to see any of these, the Tawny Owl's hoot is heard coming from the wood; and then, flying low down over the grass, we can just catch sight of the White Owl as he goes hawking for mice.

Days pass on, and the country becomes each hour more full of spring-life. In the open glades of the woods the sulphur butterfly is seen, seeming to prefer the more moist places, but ever bathing its wings in the sunbeams. Each day there are more birds to be seen; the Tree-Pipit is sitting on its favourite bush, under which it reared its young last year; and two days later the Wryneck arrives. Country folk call it the Cuckoo's mate because the two seem always to arrive together; but it is not until a week later that the Cuckoo really comes in some seasons.

Although spring had come when the Hedge-Sparrows first made their nest, the surroundings do not seem to be complete until the merry call of the Cuckoo is heard in field and wood, or

until the Swallows are skimming over the pools and meadowland. By the time the hedge parsley has grown a foot high, the Whitethroats are beginning to build their nests, and when begun these are very conspicuous ; but the builders apparently well know, that very soon the vegetation will have grown up enough to hide their little bush on the hedge-side. One day the country is hidden in thick mists ; then fine rain falls, penetrating everywhere, and little balls of water stand on the blades of grass and leaves. The Whitethroats and other small birds emerge from their nearly finished nests, looking half soaked, and causing miniature showers to fall as they hop on to the branches, and shake the drops off. Then come days of sunshine, and with a rush the full life of spring returns to the landscape.

In the grove between the wood and the orchard, orange-tip butterflies are flying in an unending procession ; as soon as one has gone by another comes, and each seems brighter than the one before. Pretty little dragon-flies are hovering over the grass, some of the brightest blue, others brown ; over the stream there is a larger one flying much quicker, darting hither and thither. White butterflies are everywhere, and a young Sparrow flies after one of these, but soon gives up the

chase and goes in search of other food. The fields are covered with buttercups, and here and there cowslips are seen, looking a very pale yellow beside the bright round discs of the dandelions. Country children will now gather bunches of buttercups and hold them under each other's chins; and if the yellow is reflected on their skin they say, "You are fond of butter." To see all of this brings back thoughts of when we were little children ourselves, and loved to play among the flowers, when the days seemed always to be as merry as they were long.

The leaves on the hedges and on some of the trees are now nearly full grown, but still remain a very light tint of green; but a sharp shower quickly followed by warm sunshine will speedily give to them a darker shade. I have seen the whole countryside turned a shade darker after such a shower.

Each day summer becomes nearer, and the birds sing louder as if to welcome its approach; especially the Blackcap and Garden-Warbler. The Wren sings continuously over its nest the livelong day, but louder during early morning and about an hour before sunset. A large red patch in the ditch shows where a clump of red campion is growing, and many of the butterflies will stop

before they pass this spot and alight on the flowers. The air is scented with may, the perfume being stronger in the evening ; this year (1899) it is later than usual, and before it has all fallen, leaving bunches of tiny green berries—which will be food for Thrushes in the autumn and winter—we come on the first wild rose of summer. We pluck it and admire the delicate flower more than we should the more rare and costly orchid, for is it not a sign that the summer has really come round?

At this time of the year, when wild roses are beginning to adorn the hedges, numbers of young birds will be met with in all directions. In the fields Missel-Thrushes are leading their young, and these keep close to their parents, eagerly running to them when either finds a worm or an insect. It is a pretty sight to see the old birds teaching the young brood to find their own food ; when anything is found it is at once pointed out, and one of the young, running forward, quickly devours it. I watched such a family one day for a considerable time, and the parents kept on discovering food while the young ate it, and during the whole time their elders did not take any themselves. While engaged in feeding, any one of the party did not notice me standing by a

gatepost, although one and another would come to within a few feet of where I was, but a movement sent them away somewhat startled.

Soon after the Thrushes had gone I was attracted by the loud song of the Wren, and looking in the direction whence it came I saw



YOUNG MISSEL-THRUSHES.

seven infant Wrens sitting on a dead branch being fed by their parents, and each time that food was brought, they fluttered their tiny wings and stuck up their little tails in excitement. I tried to get closer to them, but they saw me and at once dived into the hedge and remained still, so that not a

sign of them could be seen when I reached the spot. If I had happened to have my camera with me a very pretty photograph could have been taken.

Of course the commonest bird to be seen in the fields in joyful springtime is the Sparrow ;



YOUNG SPARROW.

each bush or tree seems to contain one, and their continuous cry, *weeche, weeche*, may be heard everywhere. I have made several attempts to photograph these young Sparrows, but have always found that they fly away whenever a camera is in sight ; although I also noticed that, as a rule, they

flew only a short distance. On one occasion, seeing a young Sparrow perched on a small bush, I tried to stalk him ; but when I got sufficiently near to take a photograph he flew a short distance, and I gave chase, trying to keep him from settling, and



YOUNG TREE-PIPIT

so, if possible, to tire him out. After a long chase, lasting about half an hour, I was able to get near enough to obtain the accompanying photograph in which it will be noticed that the Sparrow has his beak open ; too exhausted to fly farther, he called *weeche, weeche*, at me, and to judge by the

violent way in which the bird talked, he seemed to have a very strong objection to being photographed at all.

The photograph of the young Tree-Pipit was obtained in a similar way. During the operation the hen Pipit was in a great fume; she came and sat near on the ground calling plaintively *weet, weet*, all the time; and when I went off she followed for some distance apparently loudly scolding me, although all the time she had a grub in her mouth.

The Tree-Pipit is one of the first of migrants to arrive in these parts, and each season they build very near the place chosen in the previous year. As soon as they arrive they go to their old building site, and remain near for the rest of the season. In or about the first week in April, I always hear their song for the first time coming from the same bush near to which they have built for years. When singing, they usually begin while perched on a fence or on one of the topmost branches of a tree; and while singing, the bird rises in the air to a certain height, and then, with wings outstretched, and tail elevated and spread out, gradually descends calling, *see-ar, see-ar, see-ar*, until the perch from which it started is reached. Throughout a summer day the male keeps up this

performance, only occasionally changing his perch. The hen sits very close, but not so close as the



MEADOW-PIPIT.

Meadow-Pipit. I have seen the latter actually kicked off its nest by accident while walking

through the meadows with a friend. Its song resembles that of the Tree-Pipit, and is usually given forth while on the wing.

In their habits Pipits very much resemble Wagtails. While running along the ground their movements are very similar; and they have also a habit of wagging their tail up and down; their flight also is very much like that of the Wagtail's. The Meadow-Pipit seems very fond of wet or marshy ground; and, during the winter months, they may be seen in numbers feeding in meadows that are partially under water. Where many are together they fight after the manner of Starlings.

While passing a heap of faggots one day, I heard some most comical noises proceeding from the interior, and, quietly approaching, and peering in among the sticks to see what was the cause, I saw a young cock Blackbird making most laudable efforts to sing! He kept on widely opening his little beak, while holding his head up, and it was just possible to recognise some slight resemblance to the Blackbird's song, otherwise, it was not unlike the noise produced by the wheels of a cart when short of oil.

When the young bird saw me it suddenly stopped in the middle of an extraordinary note, and hopped away—this infant singer could not

properly fly—towards the path along which I had been walking ; and having my camera with me I photographed him sitting there.

The Blackbird is one of the first to breed, and their nests with eggs are often to be seen in early



YOUNG BLACKBIRD.

spring before any leaves are on the hedges, although when built thus early a holly bush or other evergreen is often used as a place to build in. The nest is neatly made of dry grasses as a rule, but some I have seen in the New Forest

were nearly twice the size of ordinary nests, being also loosely composed of green moss, showing that certain birds can readily adapt themselves to their surrounding circumstances.

The time to see the cock bird to the best advantage, is when the ground is covered with



BLACKBIRD

snow; for at such times he will come into our gardens, and when hard pressed by hunger he will even come up to a window for the food placed there for him. When the evenings grow longer he retires to the hedgerows, however, preferring those fringing the woods; and after dark he may

be heard moving about with some companions among the dead leaves underneath, and calling incessantly, *pick, pick, pick*. The Blackbird is one of the gamekeeper's best friends, owing to its habit of giving forth a loud rattling cry if alarmed, and nearly always flying directly away from the threatened danger. In the spring, during incubation, the males are very quarrelsome, driving away any other birds which come too close to their nests.

A curious thing to be noticed in connection with the Blackbird is, that they will sometimes use the same nest for several successive broods during one season, that is if they are left alone and not in any way disturbed. The Blackbird's song is one of the best to be heard in the fields; and they usually sing from some prominence, although I have heard them singing while on the ground, or even while on the wing. In some of their songs the notes of other birds can sometimes be distinguished. I once heard one repeating the Nightingale's best note, and so perfect was the imitation, that I thought it must be from a Nightingale until I caught sight of the singer perched on an oak branch. I passed this spot about an hour later, or towards dusk, when the song still held on, and if it had not been for other

notes, I should still have thought that the singer was actually a Nightingale.

Sometimes I have heard the Blackbird's rattling cry of alarm almost at midnight.

A favourite place for their nesting site is on the ground, the bank of a stream being preferred ; and when built thus the nest is either made in a slight hollow, or supported by nettles or other plants. I once saw one leave its nest on being scared by my intrusion, fly into the stream and perch on some stones about an inch below the water, remaining for some time there to watch my movements.

Another early breeder is the Song-Thrush, and long before the leaves appear, their nests may be seen in conspicuous positions in the hedges, containing prettily marked blue eggs. Their nest is made so watertight that the old nests will sometimes be seen actually holding water. Although the Song-Thrush is a fairly close sitter, I have never been able to obtain a photograph of one on its nest ; I have tried all sorts of likely devices to get a picture of the sitting bird, but they seem to be very shy of anything strange near them at such a time.

In winter, and at other times of the year, the Thrush resorts to gardens, searching well in the



SONG-THRUSH.

corners and under hedges for snails ; when successful the bird holds the snail in its beak and beats the shell against a stone. I have even seen one take hold of the snail and fling it violently backwards and forwards until a piece of flesh could be torn off, and then again pick it up to repeat the performance until all could be eaten. They will stand motionless, and watch the ground under which a worm is moving, until it shows itself, then striking with their beak downwards, will pull the worm from the earth and quickly swallow it. I once watched a Thrush doing this when the worm beneath happened to be a very long one ; the Thrush's head was thrown back as far as possible while pulling out the worm ; but still there was a portion left in the ground, and to get at this the bird stepped back a pace or two and so managed to complete the task.

The young, when having left the nest, will sit on a branch near by for a long time, waiting for food to be brought to them ; but when able to fly, they very soon go to the meadows and obtain supplies for themselves.

During the greater part of the year Thrushes feed on berries, the fruit of the hawthorn being their principal food in winter ; and they then utilise old nests such as are to be found in hedge-

rows, and which at this time are filled up with dead leaves, by using them as tables on which to eat their food. Other birds also use such nests as places to feed on, and they may often be seen sitting down eating berries which they have carried to them.

Like the Blackbird, the Thrush seems to be very fond of building on the ground among thick vegetation; numbers make their nests in clumps of rhubarb, the large leaves offering convenient shelter. The song of the Thrush, if delivered at night, when all other birds are silent, would, I believe, be considered equal, or about equal, to the Nightingale's. An individual bird will at times sing very much better than others, and the best are certainly very fine. I remember one that used to come and perch on an elm branch near my home day after day during one spring; and this singer had such a splendid voice that many people asked me what bird that was which sang so beautifully, those who were not acquainted with the Nightingale's song being quite convinced that this was one of that species. All Thrushes when giving their song seem to have a certain note that they prefer, and thus repeat it more often than other notes. I have ever heard them singing between the claps of thunder during a violent storm. During bright days in the

winter, it will often be heard. Even though huddled up in a sheltered place during a snowstorm, if the sun should happen to break through the clouds and shine for a few moments before setting, the Thrush will break out into a few notes of wild song, as if welcoming the cheerful beams as a promise of something better still to come.

During very dry summers, when their usual food, such as worms and snails, is hard to find, Thrushes eat an immense amount of fruit, principally gooseberries and currants; the former they pierce with their beak and then suck out the contents, leaving the empty skin hanging on the bush. On some of the bushes nearly the whole of the crop will be found to be thus eaten; and I have even seen them so gorged with fruit that they seemed to have some difficulty in getting away. I have known of several dozen birds being caught in one day in a small orchard without the number seeming to have diminished. Blackbirds also have much to answer for during the fruit season. On asking one bird-catcher what he did with all the birds he caught, he replied that the cocks were sold alive to a dealer in London, and the hens, not being of any money value, were killed; and if he could not find any one who would eat them they were thrown away. He had a good-sized bag full of dead hen Blackbirds.

During the winter months the fields are full of birds of the Thrush family ; and when it is frosty one can get quite close to some of them. The Fieldfare and Redwing are the most difficult to approach ; but with a little caution it is possible to get within a few yards of them. The former is rather a handsome bird, and can readily be distinguished from other Thrushes by its notes—*chuff-uff-uff-uff*—and, when flying, by its conspicuous grey back. When alarmed, they betake themselves to a neighbouring tree, and when so flying their tail feathers are spread out in the shape of a fan.

These birds used to be largely sought after by the Romans as an article of diet ; and even now large numbers are sometimes seen in our own markets. The Felt, as this bird is popularly called, offers very good sport ; during mild weather they congregate in flocks in meadows, flying away at the least alarm ; but when snow is on the ground they betake themselves to hawthorn bushes to feed on the berries. It is while they are thus employed, that large bags are made by sportsmen who lie in hiding and shoot the birds while they are feeding. During a very cold winter I knew of a labourer who, while thus lying in ambush, would each day shoot numbers of these birds, and lived on them to some extent during the cold weather.

It is said that soon after their arrival in this country in October, their flesh is not in very good condition, but that it improves towards the end of November, and continues so as long as the various berries last, which constitute their principal food. Some sportsmen will gather large quantities of hips and haws, keep them until the supplies on the hedges are all eaten, and then, by putting their bait in places where the birds congregate, will succeed in killing a large number of them.

Although there is no proof that the Fieldfare has ever nested in this country, solitary pairs are sometimes to be seen in the hedgerows in spring; but they seem very reluctant to show themselves, keeping to the thickest parts; and the majority leave our fields for their breeding stations in northern Europe about the middle of April.

The Redwing can readily be distinguished from the Song-Thrush—which at first sight it somewhat resembles—by its slightly smaller size, and rapid flight; and, with the aid of a field-glass, by the broad yellow stripe over the eye which can easily be seen.

All Thrushes show great concern for the safety of their young if these are in danger. If a Hawk or Crow should approach, they will defend their nests with great valour; but I have heard of a pair

of Jackdaws taking away young fledglings one by one in the absence of the parent Thrushes.

As soon as their feathers appear all young birds seem to grow at a rapid rate. I have frequently wanted to take a photograph of young birds when fully fledged, and have often visited many nests for that purpose ; but finding that the brood were unable to stand or fly, I have left them and returned a short time afterwards to find that their nests were empty, with no signs either of young birds or of their parents.

CHAPTER V

WHEATEAR — STONECHAT — WHINCHAT — RED-
BREAST — WHITETHROAT—HEDGE-SPARROW—
SKY-LARK

No large piece of waste ground or moor would be complete without its Wheatears ; and these sprightly little birds are well worth some careful attention, either when they first arrive in this country, and are busily engaged in attending to the duties of nidification ; or later, when preparing for migration, they will congregate on moors and downs of the open country.

Years ago great numbers were taken by shepherds on the South Downs, where they were considered to be a great delicacy by many people ; and to judge by the numbers caught, there must have been a brisk demand for them. Thus we read of two thousand dozen being snared in one

season alone in the county of Sussex ; and again of eighty-four dozen being caught by one shepherd during a single day. The method of catching them is by placing a noose made of horsehair under a raised piece of turf, so that the unsuspecting bird, while searching for food underneath the grass, soon becomes entangled. Each shepherd was said to



WHEATEAR.

manage about six hundred traps ; and by this means a man added each year several pounds to his small income.

The Wheatear is one of the most wary of our small birds, and seems always to be on the look-out for danger, especially when there is a nest to be looked after. It has been said that this can

easily be found by watching the movements of the birds; but from my own experience, I have found the truth to be exactly the opposite.

Lying in hiding under a furze-bush on a rabbit-warren on a certain evening, I endeavoured to find the site of a nest; but not once did the birds enter the burrow in which they had built and hidden their home. On the next evening I returned to the same place of concealment, and waited with no better result. While lying at full length on the grass, several rabbits came out of their burrows and commenced to play and skip about within three yards of me. One of the Wheatears also came and sat on the bush under which I was concealed, and kept on calling *tack, tack*, to its companion. I was able to see that both birds had food in their beaks, and thus conjectured that they had a brood to look after; and judging by the time they lingered near a certain burrow, I guessed that that might possibly be the place where the nest might be found. On the next day I once more went to the spot with my camera, in hopes of getting a photograph; and I was at last successful in obtaining a likeness of the cock and another of the hen. As it was a day of drizzling rain, it seemed that the birds would be more likely to enter their nest than to remain outside for any length of time. After

waiting for about an hour the hen took food to her brood, and I was surprised to find that the nest was at some distance from where I had thought most likely it would be from previous observation. When once the parent had entered, I still remained concealed, and noticed that they kept on bringing food as they would in an ordinary way.

I was struck by the rapidity with which the Wheatears disposed of the supplies for their young. The nest was situated at some distance in the burrow, beyond the reach of my arm; but the parent birds entered, disappeared from sight, and returned in the space of a few seconds, the cock being especially quick in his movements. Above the nest there was a small stake driven into the ground on which they always rested before entering their nest, using it as a kind of half-way house, and it is on this stake that the bird is shown to be sitting in the photograph. They are very restless in their habits, never remaining long in one position; and immediately on settling, the head is bent forward, then quickly raised, when the bird will sit very upright, but constantly jerking its tail.

The name Wheatear has no connection with wheat, as might innocently be supposed to be the case; it is a corruption of white, and of an Anglo-Saxon word *oers*, meaning rump, so that the name

really means *white-rump*, and so called because of the conspicuous white band over the base of the tail.

On the open moors, and often in close company with the Wheatear, we often see the Stonechat. The nest of this very handsome bird is difficult to discover, and unless its owner is seen to leave, any one might search for hours without being successful in coming on the locality. The cock will allure an intruder away by perching close to him on a bush, and calling loudly *tui, tack-tack* ; and when attention is diverted by being drawn to these excited call-notes, he will dart on to another prominent perch a little farther off ; and if followed, he will soon lead on still farther away, nor will he return to the nest until the person objected to has retired. I have seen a nest close to the edge of water on a cliff in the Isle of Wight.

It will be noticed that in places where the Stonechat is common, the Whinchat will be conspicuous by its absence. Railway embankments are favourite resorts of the latter, and its call-note is very similar to the Stonechat's, and one as well as the other can readily be attracted by giving a short whistle while also knocking two small stones together, *e.g., thu-tick, thu-tick-tick*.

About the time the young are hatched, the long

grass sometimes takes fire from sparks of passing engines, causing miniature prairie fires, this being



YOUNG WHINCHATS IN NEST.

especially the case during a hot dry summer. One evening last spring I saw two Whinchats in a terrible state of anxiety for the safety of their nest,

which was in great danger of being burnt by one of these outbreaks. I succeeded in beating out the fire with a stick ; and while this work was in progress, the birds remained as spectators quite close at hand, and seemed to be very grateful for the services rendered to them. When the danger was over, they flew to and fro, taking food to their young, which they had been vainly trying to persuade to fly from the nest.

Of all our British birds the Redbreast, or Robin, is perhaps the most popular and well known, the countries frequented extending from the Arctic Circle to northern Africa, and eastwards as far as the Ural Mountains.

This is one of the birds that every country child loves, while nearly every cottage and farmhouse has a favourite Robin. The fearless ways and winning confidence of the Redbreast win everybody's regard. Nevertheless, they are ungrateful birds ; for as soon as the cold weather is over they will desert friends who have fed them, to retire to more congenial fields and woods. I have a friend who has a tame Robin in a cage, in which it has lived contentedly for years. The only thing that disturbs its equanimity is to have its cage placed in the open air, when its song attracts all the cock Robins of the neighbourhood, which seem natu-

rally to thirst for the caged one's blood! When food is shown to him he immediately begins a song and continues singing until the meal is given.

A volume might be filled with accounts of the more or less strange habits of the Robin, but one of the most singular, and a thing I have never been able to understand, is its habit of pecking at windows. I knew of one in my own district that continually pecked at a pane of glass: the window was opened, as it seemed that the bird wished to enter, but this was evidently not the motive, for the singular performance was still continued. Food was plentiful round about; the weather was anything but cold, so that hunger could not have prompted the action; but nevertheless, so persistently was this pecking at the glass kept up, that one day spots of blood were seen on the pane thus perseveringly attacked. The bird eventually died at its work on the sill through loss of blood caused by the breaking of a blood-vessel in consequence of its exertions! The only thing that I can attribute this strange habit to is, that the Robin must have seen itself reflected in the glass, and have thought that this was another Robin. They are a pugnacious species, resenting the intrusion of others of their own species in any garden in

which they happen to have their abode, so that this was no doubt the cause of poor Cock Robin's death.



REDBREAST.

The Redbreast is to be seen in the gardens of houses quite close to London ; and they have, as a rule, a "run" of about six gardens, keeping strictly

to these. If another Robin from a neighbouring "run" happens to intrude into the ground belong-



ROBIN'S NEST IN AN OLD BAG.

ing to a rival, a battle-royal takes place ; and so persistently do they fight, that sometimes the victor will not leave until the other is dead. Quite

recently, I saw two fighting in the middle of a field, the ground at the time being covered with snow.

Robins show great attachment to their young while they are in the nest, and even for some time after they have left to take to the hedgerow on their own account. A pair built for years successively in the hole of a tree stump overgrown with ivy, but the eggs were generally taken soon after they were laid. Last spring, however, they were left to be hatched ; but when the brood were nearly ready to leave, either a cat, or more probably a weasel, attacked them at night and destroyed the young birds. The faithful mother Robin had done her best to protect her family, however ; for although almost torn to pieces, she was still in the nest when I discovered the distressing little tragedy, and the remains of the young birds were lying on the ground beneath.

Very eccentric places are sometimes chosen for nesting sites, three of which are here portrayed. The basket containing the nest was standing on a shelf in a small tool-house ; but as it was too near the roof to photograph, I placed it lower down, the better to show the eggs. The nest on the folding chair was built in the position shown, in a cricket pavilion, and although the playing season had

commenced it was allowed to remain as a curiosity until the young were able to fly away. The other was built in an old bag of seed that had been hanging in a shed for some time until portions rotted away, so leaving an opening which enabled the birds to go in and out. The pair of Robins



ROBIN'S NEST IN A BASKET.

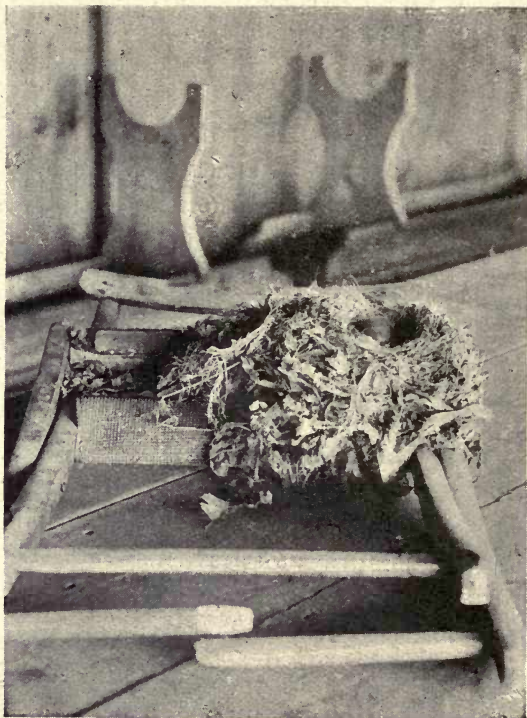
which were the owners of this nest, build in or about this shed every year, and remain about the spot during the winter ; although numbers of farm labourers are always working near, the Robins are very friendly with them. One of the birds may occasionally be seen sitting on a basket while the

men are at dinner, waiting for any little morsels that may be thrown to it, and fearlessly approaching to pick up what is given. Another pair, which are equally tame, build in a greenhouse not far from the same shed; and while the men are attending to the plants, the Robins with their young sit on the pots and do not seem to be in the least incommoded. I knew of another nest in an old kettle lying in a ditch not two yards from a Nightingale's nest. A shady bank having plenty of vegetation, or on the ground in the woods, is a favourite place for nesting.

The young Robins remain some weeks in the vicinity of their home, being fed by their parents the greater part of this time. These are then driven away from their old haunts, and compelled to go farther afield by their parents when autumn advances; and at length, when winter sets in, these young birds in their turn leave the seclusion of woods and fields to live in gardens and in the vicinity of houses where, as Thomson says—

“ Half afraid, he first
Against the window beats; then brisk alights
On the warm hearth; then, hopping o'er the floor
Eyes all the smiling family askance,
And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is:
Till, more familiar grown, the table crumbs
Attract his slender feet.”

At, or about, the beginning of June, when the hedge parsley is showing itself high above the



ROBIN'S NEST ON A FOLDING CHAIR.

meadow grass, a little bird will be seen darting up above it, rising a few feet, hovering for a moment,

just long enough to give a few snatches of its attractive song, and then dropping like a little ragged ball of feathers among the flowers. As we approach, a low muffled sound—*kurrr-kurrr* is heard, and we recognise the Whitethroat, which is ever on the watch around its nest. As we go still nearer, the note is raised in vehemence, and the feathers on the little creature's head are erect so as to form a crest.

The nest is often built almost on the ground, supported by thick grass and stems of the cow-parsnip. The hen during sitting-time will slip quietly off the eggs, and join her mate in the hedgerow ; and if we presume to look at the eggs a loud and angry *chuck-uck-uck-uck* is heard. While photographing the sitting bird my camera was well hidden under an improvised rubbish-heap ; it was a long time before the hen would return, and when she did so she first hopped on to the rubbish-heap and apparently well examined the strange thing placed near her nest. While peering into the hole I had left for the lens to point through, she disarranged the grasses in front and so obstructed the view ; she then hopped back to the nest and became comfortably seated, but only for a few moments, however, for probably finding out that the eggs were uncomfortably arranged, she sat on

the edge of the nest, and for a long time was rearranging her five eggs with her beak; when



WHITETHROAT AT HOME

this operation was finished I exposed four plates, and, leaving my camera in position, retired to

develop them, and found she had moved in every instance. After waiting another hour I was successful in obtaining a good picture of the hen.

It may be noticed, that many birds always sit in the same position on their eggs; the Whitethroat was always facing the same direction, and nearly four hours after I had exposed the plate I took another photograph to see what the difference would be, and purposely drove the bird off the nest so as to see whether she would sit in a different posture, in the two photographs. The only thing to show that the successive pictures were printed from different negatives, was, that the beak in one was raised a fraction higher than in the other; but apart from this, the bird was in exactly the same posture on each occasion.

They will use many clever dodges to allure away an enemy. One day as I was passing a bush in which a Whitethroat had built, the sitting bird fluttered off and lay on the ground, but seeing at once that it was shamming, I went nearer to see what would be the result. This caused the bird to get more excited, so that I followed her as she fluttered along the ground with one wing hanging limp and just keeping in front of me. When about twenty yards had been passed over in this way, she flew into a tree, and

perched on a branch just overhead, joyously sang her little song, and with the feathers on her head



WHITETHROAT FEEDING YOUNG.

and throat erected looked extremely pleased at having attracted a supposed foe so far away from her nest.

Undoubtedly the prettiest nest it is one's pleasure to see in wood or field is that of the Hedge-Sparrow. When this neat little structure has its blue eggs, and is set off with young green leaves of different tints, it makes a charming picture, and one's only regret is that such an



HEDGE-SPARROW.

object cannot be photographed in Nature's own colours.

The Hedge-Sparrow is a confiding and interesting little bird at all times, and one which gets used to any friend going near its nest. Building is commenced sometimes as early as March; and I have found newly made nests

containing fresh eggs as late as the first week in July. The nest of this bird is often used by the Cuckoo to place her eggs in, and perhaps this is owing to its exposed situation.

All the year round the birds remain in the vicinity of their nest, and they will build during the next year near their former haunt. They usually keep in pairs, and do not, as a rule, mix with other birds, although when the weather has been very cold, I have seen them feeding among a mixed crowd of Starlings, Sparrows, Titmice, and others. Their sweet song is heard throughout the winter and spring, their singing sometimes coming from the interior of a thick hedge; and owing to quiet, unobtrusive habits this species is not so often seen as some others which frequent the hedgerows.

When the young can leave the nest, the parents, still feeding them, will attract them some distance from their original home, and when all are able to care for themselves the old birds will return to their former haunts.

I have even known instances of this bird singing at intervals during a long winter night. Although so tame, and notwithstanding its fondness for keeping near inhabited dwellings, the Hedge-Sparrow never comes into a house like the Robin will sometimes do, but will remain more timidly among the bushes.

Next to the Redbreast, the Sky-Lark is perhaps the greatest favourite with country folk. Its stirring though simple song is always listened to and admired as one of the best which is given by meadow birds ; and as a harbinger of spring its song always gladdens the heart of listeners.



HEDGE-SPARROW FEEDING YOUNG.

especially when, after a long spell of frost, the winter at length breaks to give place to the bright and reviving sunshine of warmer days. When the winter months are comparatively mild this bird may sometimes be heard singing ; I have heard it pouring forth its song on New Year's Day with all

its power, as though the time were a gay summer morning. It was indeed exceptionally warm on that day, and had been so for some time previous.



SKY-LARK.

on Christmas Day, a week before, I heard of young Sparrows being seen in their nests.

The Sky-Lark sings at his best when his mate

is sitting. Leaving the ground near her nest, he rises in a spiral, ever getting higher and higher until quite out of sight, but still his love-song is continued, and in a few minutes, or it may be longer—sometimes he remains in the air over half an hour—he will be seen descending with outstretched wings and spread-out tail, still singing ; then slowly coming down until, about sixty feet from the ground, he closes his wings, drops like a stone, until almost touching the earth, when his wings are again opened, and skimming along over the meadow grass he will join his mate at the nest. It will be noticed that when he first rose it was from the nest ; when descending, he settles about one hundred yards from it, and if danger is threatened, he will unconcernedly feed to divert attention.

It is pathetic to hear, as I have done, how this bird, which makes the countryside so enjoyable, will suddenly stop in the midst of its beautiful song when its nest far below is being robbed of its eggs. I was once a witness of this phenomenon, and felt sad as well as indignant.

CHAPTER VI

KESTREL—SPARROW-HAWK—SWALLOW—
MARTIN—SWIFT—ROOK

GREEN fields stretch before me for miles, divided by hedges covered with honeysuckle, and dotted over with bright wild roses. In some of the meadows there stand stately oaks, and under the shade are small herds of cattle grazing, and among these is a number of Starlings, some feeding peacefully, others quarrelling, and, as they do so rising a few inches in the air, and sparring while on the wing ; and then, after some harmless pecks, quieting down and continuing to be more peaceful for a time.

In the sweet-scented meadows the grass, not yet being mown, waves in the sunlight ; and when the soft wind passes over this flower-dotted expanse, shades of grey and green are seen as the

waves go up and down with the breeze, looking like ripples on a lake when summer airs play on the calm surface. Greenfinches are calling from the higher bushes of the hedgerows, while overhead twittering Swallows are darting hither and thither, now skimming over the grass, then playing round the tops of oaks, where insects always abound; far above crescent-winged Swifts are flying swiftly, one moment over the meadows, the next being away out of sight. From a little wood comes the cry of the Cuckoo, and another answers it from a tree hard by.

But far away in the distance there is a dot in the sky, seeming to be motionless over a field of yellow buttercups; for a moment it stays there, and the next it has dropped to the meadow beneath. This is too far off to be seen distinctly, but by its movements we judge it to be a Kestrel; for presently he is up again and flies towards us, every now and then stopping in his flight and hovering here and there. At last he is almost overhead, and looking down on the meadow. Spying the Starlings among the cows, he bears up slowly against the wind and approaches them from the farther side of a large oak. Being somewhat high above the top branches of the tree, he first of all for a while hovers, and then drops

slowly in jerks as it were, as though he were suspended by an invisible cord, which is being let out in lengths of about two yards at a time. The Starlings below, all unconscious of danger, still proceed with their quarrelling and are pecking at one another.

When the Kestrel has descended to the higher branches of the tree it suddenly wheels round to our side, keeping well in near the branches. Recovering its balance and facing the wind, it now begins to hover in earnest. With a field-glass we can distinctly see every movement, and even the fierce gleam of his eye, as the light falls on it, for he is now only about thirty yards away. Lower and lower he drops, and seems to be immediately over a cow, and still the usually watchful Starlings are innocently moving about unconcerned. One that sees another with a tit-bit attacks the owner and takes away the prize by superior force ; but this is that greedy Starling's last meal. The Kestrel has singled out this very adventurer ; and, while hovering, seems to stop ; then he is motionless in the air for a second, and closing his wings he drops like a stone to seize the prey. The Starling too late sees the enemy, and runs under the neck of a grazing cow ; but the Hawk, when almost on the ground spreads

his wings and tail, skims between the nose and front legs of the cow and picks up the doomed bird in its talons. The whole scene occupies but a few seconds, and the cow continues her grazing as if nothing very tragical had happened.

With loud screams the struggling Starling is carried away to a small copse ; the other Starlings, about fifty in all, rise in a body, and with wild cries fly swiftly to the help of their captured comrade ; but the Kestrel, having the start, is first among the trees, whither the Starlings will not follow ; but they will fly round in circles screaming wildly. Louder than their cries, however, is that of the captured bird ; and unless I had actually seen it caught and heard it, I could not have believed that such cries could proceed from a Starling, for it sounded very much like a child in pain. But the cries get weaker until they are heard no more, as the Hawk quickly disposes of its prey. Meanwhile the Starlings are sitting on a tree holding a council of war, and waiting for the enemy to come out ; for they dare not enter among the bushes where they would be at a disadvantage. If noise could have saved their mate it would have been rescued without doubt, as every single Starling used its voice to its fullest power.

The Kestrel well knows the kind of reception he would receive if he was to get among this crowd of foes. I expected that he would remain in seclusion some time ; but on entering the copse I just caught sight of the bird-cannibal, as one might call him, sneaking away to the other side of the wood, and flying near the ground. Thus, after all, the Starlings were cheated out of their revenge, for they did not see their enemy get away.

In a short time the Kestrel is again over a distant meadow ; and this time, instead of hovering, he is going through that wonderful exercise also peculiar to some other birds—the power of ascending to a great height with hardly a perceptible movement of his wings. With a field-glass I can see him over the meadow slowly rising in circles, occasionally resting on outstretched wings and floating a short distance, then again starting, and rising upward without any visible movement of wing. Higher still he goes, until even through the glass he looks like a dot in the sky ; otherwise being quite invisible.

A Cuckoo now flies across the field in the direction of the copse—about the worst thing it could do under the circumstances ; for owing to the Cuckoo's resemblance to the Kestrel during flight—perhaps because of its long tail—many birds

mistake it for the Hawk and attack it fiercely in consequence. First of all the Swallows fly at the Cuckoo and dart down upon him, while other small birds come up as reinforcements ; but something still worse than all this is in store for the innocent Cuckoo. The still angry Starlings, when they see it approaching, go at their supposed enemy in full force, no doubt thinking him to be the foe which carried one of their comrades away some time previous. With loud cries they assail the Cuckoo on all sides, but none daring actually to strike. The Cuckoo, hardly knowing which way to turn, makes for the trees, and is soon lost to view, while the Starlings, having uttered their revengeful notes, return to the meadow to feed.

The Kestrel does not always obtain its food by hovering, as they may sometimes be seen searching among the stubble for supplies.

I once set several traps in a field that was infested with rats, and when examining these on the next morning I saw a Kestrel hovering near one of them. As I watched its movements, I noticed that it remained near for some time, probably not liking the sight of the large rat that was caught. But presently the bird pounced down and commenced eating the trapped animal, and I willingly left him to enjoy his repast. About three hours

later I again examined the trap and found only a portion of the rat's tail, a few bones and the feet which the Kestrel had left. I do not know whether a Kestrel would attack an animal of the size of a rat unless it was powerless to defend itself like the one just mentioned ; but if they do, this would further show that they are great friends to farmers, as smaller rodents, such as mice and shrews, are known to be their chief food.

Landowners on the north side of London must, I think, be ignorant of the immense amount of good these birds do, for the gentry appear to allow all to be shot that happen to show themselves. Last spring a pair of Kestrels took up their abode in the fields round about my home, and just when I was hoping they would rear a brood of young, an unknowing labourer shot them ; and not being able to dispose of such a delicacy, he himself ate them both ! These Kestrels must have been exceptionally tender, otherwise the man must have had a strong digestion, for this species of fowl is one of the last that one would voluntarily choose to dine upon.

On the day of writing this, however, I have seen a pair of Kestrels in a neighbouring field, and I therefore hope that, at all events, these may be allowed to remain, if only for the purpose of adding

interest to the countryside ; for it is one of the prettiest of sights to watch how gracefully a Kestrel can hover above the earth.

The Sparrow-Hawk is one of the boldest of birds ; and is also perhaps without exception the most spirited of all the Hawks that inhabit the British Isles.

I remember the time when it was possible to see a Sparrow-Hawk almost any day in our north Middlesex fields ; but now a specimen is only seen at very long intervals ; for although I am constantly abroad in the open air, it is over a year since I saw one of these fine birds on the wing.

It is an interesting sight to watch the Sparrow-Hawk chasing its prey. On one occasion I noticed one sitting on a railway arch watching a number of Larks in a field adjoining. It must have been nearly half an hour before he stirred ; but when he did move it was to chase a Lark that had strayed from a flock of others. Like a dart the Sparrow-Hawk left his perch to pursue the frightened Lark, which was seen twisting and turning in the air trying to dodge its pursuer. It made for the nearest tree, dashing through the smaller branches, and so gained on the enemy ; but this was only for a moment, for the Hawk rose above the tree, increased his pace, and then, with

lightning-like rapidity, dashed down upon the doomed Lark as it was leaving the other side of the tree. As the Hawk struck its prey a little cloud of feathers was seen ; and the Lark, either stunned or killed by the blow, fell a few feet, and was then instantly caught in the talons of its



SPARROW-HAWK.

murderer, which now more leisurely flew back to the railway embankment to enjoy the meal thus provided.

The Sparrow-Hawk does not confine itself to small birds ; it will often attack Wood-Pigeons, Partridges, or even larger game. The hen is larger than the male, measuring from two to three inches

in length more than her mate. Owing to its pluck or courage, this Hawk used often to be used by falconers to secure their game.

For breeding purposes the Sparrow-Hawk retires to a thick and most unfrequented part of the wood. The nest, which is placed close to the trunk of a tree, is generally actually built by the Hawks, but sometimes the deserted nest of a Crow or a Wood-Pigeon is said to be appropriated by them. The one shown in my picture was undoubtedly made by the occupants themselves, and was of immense size, the foundation being small sticks, on which were placed smaller twigs, the whole interior being dotted over with white down, probably from the breast of the sitting hen. The four eggs were very fine specimens ; and one, as will be seen in the picture, is almost free from spots. It was of a faint greenish-blue colour, and two of the others varied in their number of spots, while the fourth was handsomely blotched and spotted in several shades of a rich reddish-brown.

While I was in the tree which contained this nest the hen appeared to be desirous of attempting to attack me, but at length she contented herself with venting her feelings by repeatedly flying to a branch near the nest and uttering a

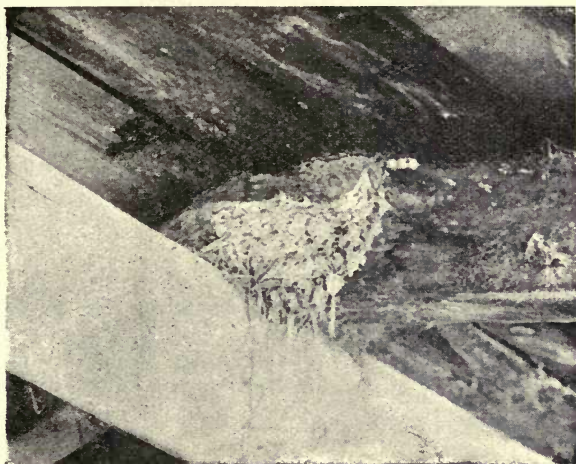
short sharp cry of defiance difficult to express in writing.

This pair of Hawks, I believe, rear their brood in the same place in each successive year, for I have repeatedly seen them in that part of the wood in the nesting season. The wood itself I do not name for obvious reasons.

Between haying-time and corn harvest, young Swallows will be heard twittering in the meadows, the most likely place to see them being on the dead branch of one of the large oaks, or on the wands of the sallows. Sitting in a row, these growing songsters twitter sweetly while waiting for food to be brought to them. In the time between their frequent meals, they are engaged in preening their feathers. When the parents come with supplies, they do not settle on the branch, but hover in front of the young birds, and so feed them in what seems to be a singular way. One or two of the brood will leave the tree and follow their parents ; and when enough food has been collected, the old birds feed the young ones in the air, both hovering for a moment ; and then the young, while seeming to twitter their thanks, will return to their perch in the oak to rest.

Later in the season, or in early autumn, before fading leaves become tinted with russet and gold

Swallows will congregate of an evening in great numbers in company with House-Martins, these parties being principally composed of the young birds of the season. It is interesting to watch their evolutions. Leading this army are often to



SWALLOW'S NEST ON THE RAFTERS OF A BARN.

be seen a few older birds of both species. First speeding along over the fields they go out of sight, but in a few minutes they are back again, the old birds calling *twiz-it, twiz-id-it*, while the younger answer *whit-whit*. And now they will all ascend to a great height, each one rising in a series of

rings ; but in the confusion to the eye caused by such numbers, it is difficult to distinguish these circles. When a certain height is reached they again speed swiftly onward in a downward slanting direction, and then, again skim over the surface of the meadows. These performances are kept up



NEST OF HOUSE-MARTIN.

until dusk ; and then, retiring to the willows and willows bordering on the stream, the whole company will retire to rest for the night.

Owing to the fact that Swallows roost over water, their numbers being increased by the flocking together of the younger birds just before their migration, persons ignorant of their habits, even

nowadays believe that they hibernate during winter under water, or until their reappearance in the following spring. Although believing in migration, Gilbert White held strongly to the opinion that a few of the late birds of the Swallow tribe hibernated during winter. In one of his letters he says: "Repeated accounts of this sort, spring and fall, induce us greatly to suspect that House-Swallows have some strong attachment to water, independent of the matter of food ; and though they may not retire into that element, yet they may conceal themselves in the banks of pools and rivers during the uncomfortable months of winter."

Dr. Johnson is said to have once remarked in conversation : " Swallows certainly sleep all the winter. A number of them *conglobulate* together, by flying round and round, and then all in a heap throw themselves under water, and lie in the bed of a river."

Swifts have a habit of soaring to a great height at dusk, sometimes being quite out of sight and appearing like tiny dots even as seen through a field-glass. Founded on this habit is the mistaken popular belief, that these birds float in the air all night, roosting, as it were, on their outstretched wings !

I delight to watch the movements of a colony of Rooks, either while they are feeding in a field, or while they are engaged in the more arduous duties of incubation ; during the latter process is perhaps the best time to take notice of them. In the early part of the year, about the end of February or beginning of March, they may be seen returning to the vicinity of their former nests, and it is then that their spring councils seem to be held. Sitting on a tree near their old haunts in small parties of eight or ten, what appear to be long conversations are held, one or two occasionally flying over to the old nests to take note of their condition. After a few meetings of this kind have come off, the assembly will set to work to repair their old nests, when those birds that are first to begin work will unceremoniously proceed to demolish property belonging to absent comrades, so that in a very short time certain nests will entirely disappear. In a few days the entire rookery is full of life ; all are busy, and some of the more forward nests already contain eggs. While the hen sits, her partner brings food, and with sundry apparent scoldings from the hen, for the supply being so long in coming, she receives the contents of her mate's beak, the cock then flying away to fetch further supplies. The evening is the best time to

see this feeding of "my lady." It is then that her attendant comes home more heavily laden, and after disposing of this welcome aliment, he will hold a loud and long conversation with neighbour Rooks, which in turn greet with harsh cries those that are extra late in coming home.

When the young Rooks appear there are great rejoicings in the black colony ; long and discordant are their cries or congratulations when Rooks return to their partners with food. Then in due time, when the young ones have grown apace, they will sit on the edge of their nest to greet their admiring parents with subdued *caws*. But after taking note of this happy though noisy scene, look upon another.

It is the same old rookery, and the same inhabitants, but under what different circumstances ! Standing under the trees are several sportsmen dealing out death to the poor helpless young birds, of whom some fall back wounded into the nests that have been their happy homes ; others, while their life is ebbing, cling to a branch, but at last fall back, and as their hold loosens they drop to the ground with loud thuds. The distracted parent Rooks, flying above out of gunshot, are entreating their young to leave the nests, and some will attempt to do this ; but after flapping a

short distance they fall a prey to the guns. Thus the spring day passes, the many-tinted flowers of the smiling and perfumed meadow seeming to be quite out of keeping with such cruel extermination. I suppose such work has to be done ; but it does not strike one as being genuine sport, this standing beneath a tree to shoot helpless birds which cannot fly many yards, or which even have to be hustled out of their nests to become a mark for the "sportsmen" below. I am fond of a little shooting myself, but sport of this kind seems to go against one's humanity, or even self-respect. When out shooting I like to see a bird killed at once, and not left to die of wounds in its nest as is the case with many of the young Rooks referred to.

There are times, as that of seed-sowing, when without doubt it may be quite necessary to shoot birds for scarecrows, or to diminish their numbers. I remember an old peasant who sometimes had duties of this kind fall to his lot. In one large field many persons tried in vain to kill a Rook to serve for a "scarecrow," and so this old veteran was given a chance. He had handled divers sorts of guns in his time, but perhaps there was no make he liked better than an old muzzle-loading rifle converted into a shot-gun. This had a very long

barrel, and consequently carried to a great distance, and it was for this reason that the weapon was regarded with so much favour. "These modern guns are all very well in their way," he would say, "but give me my old rifle for a good day's sport ; its a reg'lar devil for killing !"

So it actually proved ; for, hiding himself in a ditch, he waited for the Rooks to come to the field to feed, and had not waited long when the flock arrived, though they settled far out of range ; stragglers came to within about eighty yards' distance, however, and my friend got ready to fire. "Let 'em get a bit nearer," he muttered ; but the birds scented danger and prepared to fly. Bang ! A loud report rent the air and echoed and re-echoed round and round, and when the smoke had cleared away there were two Rooks lying dead on the land, the distance when measured proving to be a little over seventy yards.

The two dead Rooks were propped up in the field so as to resemble as far as possible living birds in the act of feeding, and the others did not venture into the field again. It was very interesting to watch them as they flew homewards past the fatal spot ; every now and then one would leave its companions to fly down near to the dead birds,

to *caw* loudly, as if entreating them to get up and fly away. On several successive evenings, as the Rooks passed, a number would swoop down to their dead comrades in this way; but one more particularly—evidently a near relative of one of the fallen pair—would sit on a tree hard by and



ROOKS AT HOME.

caw for an hour or more at a time to his unresponsive friends. After a week of this experience he must have come to realise that they were really dead, for he flew away and did not repeat his plaintive calls. What seemed especially to exasperate him was the conduct of two Grey Wagtails,

that unconcernedly walked round the dead Rooks, and actually picked out and swallowed the maggots from their decaying bodies !

During frosty weather Rooks will approach very near to our homes, even coming into gardens to take the Sparrows' food. Others will sit on the trees and wait until a Sparrow flies off with a large piece of bread or other tit-bit ; and then one will leave its perch to chase the Sparrow until it is compelled to drop its load. Then the Rook, in turn, will be chased by its companions, and a scuffle goes on ; and by the time the piece of bread is disposed of, many birds have had a small share of the spoil. A friend once informed me of a pair of Rooks he watched chasing one another ; one of which had a dainty morsel of something in his beak, which the other wanted to take away. While the former was being chased, he managed, unobserved by the other, to drop the food, and in its eagerness to possess this, the other still continued the chase. The artful bird which had dropped the piece led the pursuer a long chase, until the latter noticed that the prize he had in view was gone, and each then went its respective way. In due time, however, the "knowing one," waiting until the other was well away, made a circuit of about a mile, returned to the spot where

the food was dropped, and then enjoyed in peace a quiet and well-earned repast.

When watching a flock of Rooks it is always interesting to notice their different notes and cries. There seems almost as much variety in their language as it would be possible to find among birds ; they certainly seem able to communicate with each other in a striking way. When a choice piece of food is unearthed they *caw* softly to themselves while eating it ; but this note is difficult to hear unless very close. Another note, uttered while on the wing, is a shrill *kree-o* ; while others sound like *kraaw*, *krree*, *kree* ; but the time to hear the greatest variety of notes is when, without any apparent reason, they leave the meadow, and all ascend high above the trees, and commence to perform those aerial circles, known as a "school," or the "Rooks' parliament." Many curious antics are performed by a few birds, such as diving from a height and twisting and turning in their downward flight. If this is to amuse the others, they certainly show their approval by the Babel of noise they make. Then the "parliament" is rapidly dissolved, and each member having had its say, quietly descends to earth. Country folk say that these "schools" forecast rainy weather.

One evening, when the Rooks were going home,

a charge of shot was fired at them from the corner of a field without any of their number being hit ; but for weeks afterwards, when approaching that corner, they all turned off about three hundred yards to the right, and skirted the field, getting into their original course when this was passed.

CHAPTER VII

CARRION-CROW — OWLS — SHRIKE — LAPWING—
SNIPE—WOODCOCK

THE word "Crow" is used in a general sense by country people to describe almost any bird of black plumage; but, strictly speaking, it means the Carrion-Crow, which in its habits is very different from the Rook, although to a casual observer they may appear to be very similar. The old Rook can be distinguished by having a bare patch of skin surrounding the base of the bill. In the young this is absent until after their second moult, and it might be difficult to distinguish one from the other; but there is still a sure way of distinguishing between the two species providing it is possible somewhat closely to examine them. The gloss on the feathers of the Crow is purple on the back, green on the head and throat, while the black plumage of the Rook is glossed with blue.

On one of the finest oaks in Middlesex a pair of Carrion-Crows reared their brood successfully



NEST OF CARRION-CROW (*exterior*).

until a piece of ground near was marked out for allotments. One of the amateur gardeners, mistaking Crows for the Rooks, which stole the seeds,

borrowed a gun, shot one of the Crows and hung it over his garden as a warning to all other offenders. The one remaining seemed very much distressed at seeing her mate thus hung up, and she sat on one of the neighbouring trees ever and anon giving out a dismal *kaarr*; after a day or two had passed she disappeared, and while walking in the fields I saw her lying dead under the tree on which she had mourned the loss of her mate! There was not a mark on her body of any violence; the poor bird in her sorrow had evidently refused to eat, for, on her gizzard being opened and examined, there was not a grain of food to be seen, nor did it look as if there had been for some time. There was plenty of food round about these allotments, so that it could not have been through any scarcity that the Crow died.

The Carrion-Crow often has to suffer for the sins of his near relation the Rook; but for the greater part of the year the Crow really does a great deal of good on behalf of agriculturists, as, owing to the scarcity of carrion, such birds have to feed on insects and small animals, such as rats and mice. But as nothing seems to come amiss to Crows in the breeding season, when hungry young ones are clamouring for food, the parents, em-

boldened at such a time, will enter a farmyard to carry off a young fowl or duck such as they can obtain.

In the reign of Henry VIII. a law was passed for the destruction of Crows and Rooks, as owing to their great numbers they were deemed injurious to farmers. Every hamlet was to provide Crow-nets for ten years, and at certain fixed times the inhabitants concerned had to meet and discuss the advisability of using any fresh ways, such as occurred to them, of killing these supposed damaging trespassers.

The Crow, as a rule, builds far away from birds of its own species, but where its own kind are numerous several nests will sometimes be found together. I have seen three only a few yards apart in a small group of tall trees. The nests are very thickly lined with sheep's wool or any soft material to be had; and the builders take a long time in completing their work. I knew of a pair that were engaged for a fortnight on the arduous labour of lining alone. The picture is from a nest that was deserted by its owners, and as it was impossible to photograph it in its lofty and slender position so that the eggs might be seen, the branch on which the nest was placed was cut off, but it suffered somewhat severely in its descent, and in

consequence has the appearance of being rather "shaken up."

I shall never forget the view I once enjoyed from a high elm standing on the side of a stream, a Crow's nest being in the tree. It was at night, and when the top was reached the stream winding



CARRION-CROW.

through the meadows could be seen for miles, like a broad, white strip gradually getting narrower until it was a tiny silver brook winding its way through the flat fields. Here and there it widened into a miniature lake; at other points clumps of trees seemed to break the silver line. Beyond

the marshes, the unpoetic glare from a factory furnace showed red through the semi-darkness ; and by the side of this ran another silver line—the canal—but not so bright as the natural stream. Although it was a tract of flat and unpicturesque country, as seen from below, from my lofty point of view, and with the water shining sufficiently to relieve the monotony, the scene was one that was remarkable enough to be remembered, and suggested many things connected with bird-life.

Not very many years ago the Raven used to breed in our inland counties ; and not far from my home there still stands a tree in which the last pair of these birds built their nest in Middlesex. Owing to game-preserving, these and many more interesting species are now driven away from their former haunts to the more wild and mountainous regions ; but even in such retreats they are still cruelly molested by the agents of professional egg-collectors. Unless something is done, and is done very soon, to protect our rarer breeding birds, many species will be altogether exterminated as far as our British Isles are concerned. The professional egg-collector has much to answer for in this matter of killing off our rarer specimens. I have met with many of them in my rambles in Bird-land ;

and with one and all it seems to be the rule to get all the eggs they can lay their hands on, and of every kind; no matter whether the eggs are rare or common, the whole clutch is taken.

The more rational pursuit or art of birds-nesting, as it is called, can be pursued without taking the whole clutch, or causing the birds to desert the nest; and this is perhaps one of the most fascinating and healthy pursuits of boyhood, and it has been the means of making many a naturalist. As regards myself, when birds-nesting I prefer to take my camera instead of a collecting-box, and I would much rather have a photograph of a nest, or of the sitting bird, than the rarest egg.

In a little book published by the Society for the Protection of Birds by W. H. Hudson, entitled "Lost British Birds," the author sums up the case in the following words: "It is after all very difficult to determine which of the following three inveterate bird-destroyers have done and are doing the most to alter, and, from the nature-lover's point of view, to degrade, the character of our bird population: The Cockney sportsman, who kills for killing's sake; the gamekeeper who has set down the five-and-twenty most interesting indigenous species as 'vermin' to be extirpated; or, third and last, the greedy collector, whose methods are as discreditable as his action is injurious."

The reason why Owls should so generally have been associated with goblins and ghosts is probably because many of this species are actually out and about during the time these supernatural beings are also supposed to be abroad. The Romans seem to have been among the first to associate Owls with superstitious fancies. With the ancient Greeks it evidently was not considered altogether as being a bird of ill-omen. Homer, as translated by Cowper, seems simply to have connected the Owl with long-winged birds :—

“There many a bird of broadest pinion built
Secure her nest, the owl, the kite, and daw,
Long-tongued, frequenter of the sandy shores.”
Odyssey, Book v., lines 77-79.

In what kind of superstitious dread the Romans held the Owl can be realised by references made by Pliny and quoted by Mr. Watkins in “Gleanings from the Natural History of the Ancients” :—

“The great-horned owl is of mournful import, and more to be dreaded than all other birds in auspices connected with the state. It inhabits waste places, and those not merely deserts, but dreadful and inaccessible localities; being a prodigy of night, making its voice heard in no manner of song, but rather in groaning. So whenever

seen in cities or in daylight it is a direful portent. Perchance it is not so much fraught with horror when seen sitting on private houses. It never flies where it lists, but is always borne along in a slanting direction. Having once entered the capitol, the city was purified on account of it in the same year. There is an unlucky and incendiary bird, owing to which I find in the 'Annals' that the city was repeatedly purified, as when Cassius and Marius were consuls, in which year also it was cleansed, as a horned owl had been seen. What this bird is I cannot find out, nor does tradition tell. Some say that any bird is an incendiary, if it appears bearing a coal from the altars. Others call it a *spinturnix*, but neither can I find any one to tell me what kind of bird this is. Another confession of general ignorance is that it was called by the ancients 'a bird which forbade things to be done.' Nigidius terms it a thievish bird, because it breaks the eggs of eagles. There are, besides, several kinds, treated of in the Etrurian ritual, which have now, marvellously enough, died out, although those birds which man's appetite lays waste increase. One Hylas wrote very skilfully concerning omens, and tells that the owl, with several other predatory birds, comes out tail first from the egg, inasmuch as the eggs are

weighed down by the heavy heads of the chicks, and consequently present the tails of these birds to the cherishing influence of the mother's body.

"Crafty is the mode in which owls fight other birds. When surrounded by a great number, they fling themselves on their backs, and fight with beak and claws, their bodies being closely contracted and thus protected on all sides. The kite will help them, from a natural kinship in robbery, and shares the combat. Nigidius says that owls sleep for sixty days during winter, and have nine different cries" (Pliny, x. 16-19).

When popular belief made the Owl to be a messenger of ill-omen we need not wonder that even in modern times the mournful hoot of the Tawny Owl, or the more hissing screech of the Barn-Owl, is understood by the ignorant and superstitious to be as ominous as the actual cry of a goblin. I was once awakened during the small hours of morning, and asked to come to the front of the house, as there was some one outside wailing and calling as if in great pain or distress. Thinking, in my half-sleepy state, that there might be a murder or some other terrible tragedy happening outside, I had thoughts of taking my gun with me, but happily I first went and listened to the sounds. No sooner was I in the room, where these

were more plainly heard, than the most unearthly kind of cries proceeded from just outside the window. At first I thought something terrible had really happened; but no sooner was the noise repeated than it was at once recognised as the very unmusical hoot of the Tawny Owl. Perched on a branch just outside a front bedroom window, this bird, with its mournful cries, had alarmed the household. After proper explanations I retired with the sincere wish, that people in general would acquire greater knowledge of natural history, so as to be competent to distinguish the voice of a night-bird, and thus not need to call up any one at midnight in order to be reassured or to have their alarm allayed.

Many writers, including poets, since the time of the Romans, have, in their descriptions of uncanny midnight scenes, introduced the Owl to add to the sombreness of the scene.

"The shrieking lich-owl that doth never cry,
But boding death."—DRAYTON.

Shakespeare in many places makes use of superstitious beliefs:—

"I have done the deed:—Didst thou not hear a noise?
I heard the owl scream, and the crickets cry."

Macbeth, Act ii., Scene ii

The White or Barn-Owl is said by superstitious country folk to give forth its weird cry outside the window of a room in which there lies a dying person.

On a light summer night this Owl may often be seen quartering the meadows with great regularity; and at times it will hover in a similar way to the Kestrel. I once watched one as he flew over some arable land on such a night as that mentioned. He rose and flew about twenty feet above-ground, and proceeded slowly a short distance; stopped and hovered for nearly half a minute; then, with closed wings, dropped to earth; a sharp squeak was heard, followed by a short scuffle and the Owl flew away with a victim in its talons.

The Barn-Owl breeds in many places round about our district, and two years ago the Tawny Owl was increasing in numbers until most, if not all, were trapped by a gamekeeper, to whom I referred in a preceding chapter. A neighbouring gamekeeper once proudly told me, that there had not been a Hawk or an Owl in his wood that was not immediately shot for a great many years; and although he looked after a good-sized tract of woodland I believe he spoke the truth, as I have never seen a sign of either species in that quarter during my rambles.

One of our prettiest summer visitors is the Red-backed Shrike. This really handsome bird used,



NEST OF RED-BACKED SHRIKE.

to be fairly common in our northern suburban district, but now only very few pairs breed in our hedgerows. The Butcher Bird, as it is called

makes very little attempt at concealment when building ; but its nest is often placed almost out of reach in a high thick thorn hedge. The picture is of one in such a position ; and a very difficult object it was to photograph. We commenced by borrowing a table from a house near ; and on this were piled sundry rickety packing-boxes, and on these the photographer mounted with his camera, while the attendant below held on to the table and boxes so as to prevent a collapse or a fall into the deep ditch alongside. The hen sits very close, but we were prevented through darkness coming on to obtain her likeness.

When the young brood are about it is amusing to watch the antics of the old male bird. While the young are skulking in the hedgerow, he mounts to a prominent branch, and roundly scolds any intruder to the utmost of his power. Repeatedly hovering, rapidly turning about on the branch, with his handsome tail spread out, and which he turns about in all sorts of queer ways, he utters at regular intervals a loud *tak-tak-tak*, and is evidently of a very excitable temperament ; and his interested wife sits quietly on a higher branch watching with evident satisfaction the action of her mate. This miniature Hawk, as his habits seem to make him feeds on mice and lizards, as well as bees and,



LAPWING.

other insects. Occasionally it eats small birds, and these may sometimes be seen in his larder, which consists of the sharp thorns round his nest on which the various food is impaled until needed for daily use.

In winter, large flocks of Lapwings, or Peewits, are to be seen in some of the fields in our suburb ; but very few remain to breed, although in fields a little farther up the country, numbers may be seen in the breeding season. Both names of this bird have been suggested from its habits and cry : Lapwing probably from its flight, and Peewit from its note. Its eggs are always in great demand in the early spring as a table delicacy, and the first in the market always command a high price.

The love-call of this bird is one of the earliest signs of coming spring ; and it is slightly different from the ordinary plaintive cry *pee-e-wit* ; it sounds, rather, something like *pi-weep*, while there is a curious drumming noise made by the wings as he swiftly rushes through the air. When the young brood, which leave their nest as soon as they are hatched, are hiding among surrounding tufts of grass, as they do when any one approaches, the parent Lapwings will fly round the intruder's head, and utter a lengthened *pee-e-e-wit*, sometimes only calling *pee-e*, *pee-e-e* ; and when we get to the

actual place where the young are hiding, the distracted parents will sometimes settle not far off and feign lameness or a broken wing.

When they leave their nest containing eggs, their actions are very different ; instead of flying round an intruder, they run several yards along



YOUNG LAPWING.

the ground, then quietly rise and fly away. I once watched a pair which evidently had young ones in hiding among the patches of grass, and the male tried many tricks to deceive us. Thus, when we retired some distance to watch his movements, he sat on a dummy nest, in full view so as to lead us

to believe that he was sitting on eggs, his mate meanwhile quietly entering the grass to see after her family. These dummy nests are to be seen wherever many of this species breed together ; and although they are sometimes lined with one or two small pieces of dried grass, they never contain eggs, and are usually in a rather prominent position, so that they may be conveniently used by the male bird as a look-out station, from whence he can announce the approach of an enemy. They are also said to be caused by the male birds, which in their amorous delight have been supposed to dance for their mate's entertainment.

During damp autumn days, preceding early winter, small parties of Snipe haunt the marshy parts of the fields ; and it is possible to get quite close to them before they quickly rise and hie away with their rapid zigzagging flight. While they are on the ground, however, it is almost impossible to distinguish them as they squat low on the surface.

The Woodcock also I have seen in our fields, but only on very rare occasions, principally in autumn. In Epping Forest this bird is to be seen in early spring, but never stays to breed there according to my observation.

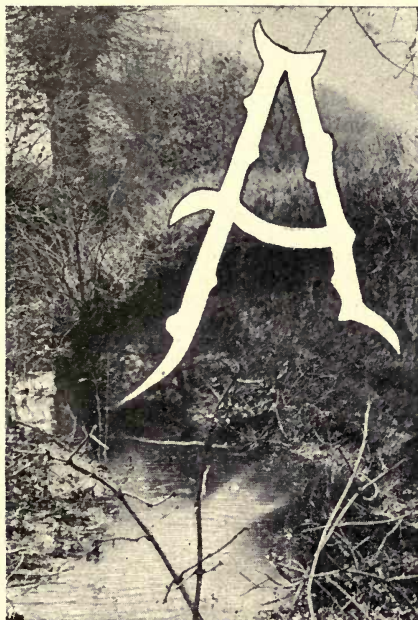


PART III

THE STREAM AND ITS BANKS

CHAPTER VIII

MOOR-HEN—YOUNG THRUSHES



ALMOST throughout its entire length our Brook runs through cultivated land. My own acquaintance with its banks is confined to one stretch of that part, which rises from a chief source near Hadley Wood, to where it flows into the river Lea at

Edmonton. It is but a comparatively short piece that I have followed ; but from this portion, being a little world in itself, my notes have been gathered.

The water always moves sluggishly except in stormy weather, and then it sometimes overflows the banks, and is quickly transformed into a rushing torrent, carrying before it all things that would hinder its course. What floods on the Green as well as in the street, the "oldest inhabitant" of Lower Edmonton could tell us of ! I have known a storm of rain suddenly to transform fields into lakes. In very dry weather, however, the water ceases to flow at all, and even pools in hollows will gradually dry up. A very thick vegetation then quickly grows in places, amongst which a number of rabbits will take up their quarters and stay in security until the rains come on again,

A long stretch of this Brook is bordered on one side by a large and charming orchard, and on the other by a private wood, one of the few remaining pieces of Old England which has never been cultivated—a portion of Enfield Chase over which the Tudor and the Stuart sovereigns hunted the stag, and only a mile away from which one of their palaces in part still remains. It was part of this picturesque tract of land that

Charles Lamb referred to when he wrote: "A sweeter spot is not in ten counties round ; you are knee-deep in clover, that is to say, if you are not above a middling man's height ; from this paradise, making a day of it, you go to see the ruins of an old convent at March Hall, where some of the painted glass is yet whole and fresh. If you do not know this, you do not know the capabilities of this country, you may be said to be a stranger to Enfield. I found it out one morning in October, and so delighted was I that I did not get home before dark, well a-paid."

The other portion of the Brook flows through meadows and cultivated land, divided in one place by a railway embankment, having beneath a long tunnel through which the stream flows. Owing to this and another tunnel becoming stopped, during a violent storm, the surrounding fields were, on one occasion, flooded, the water in places being twenty feet or more deep. From the railway the view was as though a great lake had suddenly been formed. The remarkable thing was the rapidity with which the water receded ; in a few hours all was gone, and the stream had got back to its natural flow, but leaving the green meadows and fields, with their growing crops, looking like mud flats in the Essex marshes.

I have sometimes seen Moor-hens swimming in security under the tunnel referred to, when sportsmen with their guns have been about ; and the birds evidently knew that they were comparatively safe, providing they kept far enough away, or in the middle of the low, long arch.

During a storm in the early part of last year a piece of iron fencing was carried by the torrent of water into this low-roofed tunnel ; and this somehow got fixed about a third of the distance through, so that a quantity of sticks and rubbish gradually accumulated in front of this obstruction. On a platform thus formed a pair of Moor-hens built their nest. On the hottest days of summer the atmosphere is always very cool in this long covered way, and it is somewhat surprising that any birds should choose such an odd kind of site on which to build ; but nevertheless, not only was their brood successfully reared, a second nest was built on a little island of mud still farther in the tunnel.

It was interesting to note, that as soon as their young were hatched, the parents provided a large additional nest outside the arch, in a warmer and more sunny position, for their family to roost in. Then, when their young had grown somewhat, the Moor-hens added yet another nest about two

feet away from the second one. On my visiting these one evening, the hen was comfortably seated on the largest nest with her head tucked under her wing. I could not help being struck with her apparent large size, but when suddenly she awoke, and looking round spied an intruder, this motherly bird quickly rose followed by three nearly full-grown young Moor-hens which she had been covering. This of course accounted for her seeming large dimensions; but how all four managed to squeeze into the available space I could not understand. The next day I went again to the tunnel, and, approaching quietly, had the satisfaction of seeing the young Moor-hens in their quarters, but could not tell how many there were of them, as all hurried away in various directions the moment I approached. Four days later I was surprised to see still another nest provided, and which I quite believe the young Moor-hens must have built for themselves, evidently finding that, as they grew bigger, the accommodation their parents had given them did not grow in similar proportion to themselves. As far as my personal observation goes, it seems that all Moor-hens build additional nests for their young to roost in; or otherwise, that the young birds build on their own account. I have seen this similar habit mentioned

in connection with the Coot ; but although I have consulted several special authorities for this purpose, I have not found that such roosting-nests of the Moor-hen have been mentioned. In some



MOOR-HEN.

places small groups of these additional nests may be seen.

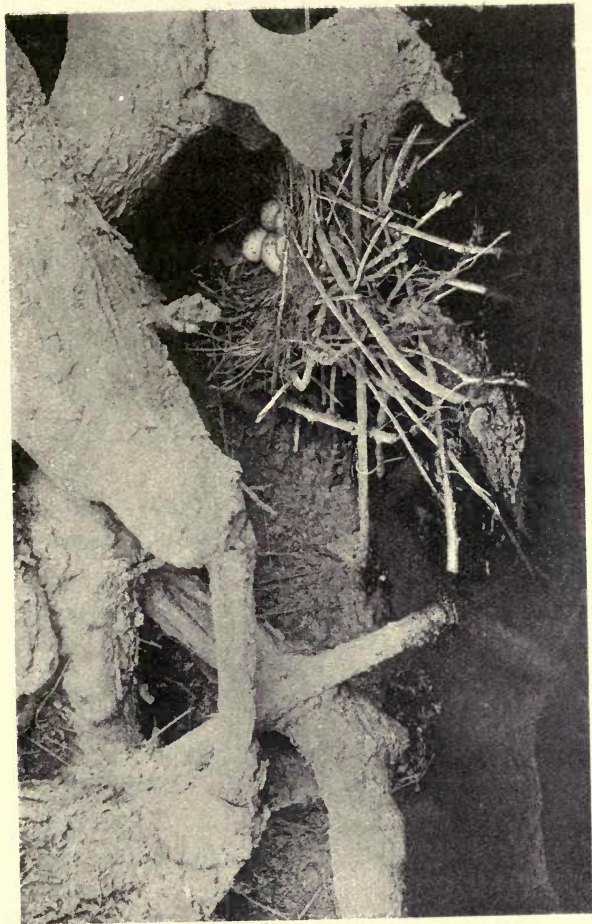
Three years ago a pair of Moor-hens made several attempts, during the breeding season, to build in a dangerous place ; but in each instance a storm swept both nest and eggs away. A year later a pair built in a hawthorn bush about ten feet

above the water ; and I believe that they must have been the same pair which had their nests destroyed in the year previous, and that they thus profited by stern experience. The seven young were safely reared ; and last year this same pair built in another bush over the water not far from their site of the season before. It was quite a study to watch them there ; whenever any one approached, the sitting hen would, with closed wings, dive from her elevated seat into the water beneath ; and so well was this feat done, that hardly a ripple was seen on the surface of the stream, the only indication of disturbance being a "plop" when the diver reached the water. While the hen was sitting, her mate might nearly always be seen lingering about a yard or so from the nest ; he would never dive ; but, if frightened would fly from the bush with a loud flapping of wings while struggling to get through the branches. I was very anxious to see how the young birds got from the nest to the water, or whether their parents fed them while in the nest ; but although I went many times I was unable to discover ; the young on one occasion had disappeared, so that they evidently took to the water as soon as they were hatched.

I watched these Moor-hens very closely through

wishing to see if an additional nest would be built for the young to sleep in ; and sure enough, almost as quickly as it was possible for the old birds to build, a large and comfortable one was made, and in such a position as to command a view from nearly all quarters. This was thickly lined with fine dried grass, and was sufficiently high above the water to keep dry. For several evenings after its completion I watched this nest, and nearly every time the hen was seen to be asleep with several young beneath her wings, so that I was able to get quite close to both mother and family. On the occasion of one of these visits I managed to get almost within arm's length of the hen, but startled her very much when a snapping twig told of my presence. After this the nest began to get visibly smaller each evening, so that I watched the more closely, and was at length astonished to find that the parents, evidently not liking my intrusions, were moving the nest piece by piece to the other side of the stream, and were there rebuilding underneath an overhanging branch, so that I found some difficulty in seeing it at all, much more to reach the site.

Along the banks of the Brook there is a number of trees, principally oak ; the water has washed away the earth from their base, and among



MOOR-HEN'S NEST UNDER ROOTS OF TREE.

the twisted roots Moor-hens will often build. Last year a pair did so within a few feet of a public path, and so skilfully concealed was their nest, that it escaped the notice of the numerous small boys who infest the neighbourhood in search of eggs.

One day, while passing this spot, I had the pleasure of seeing the young, in charge of their mother, swimming about ; but the old bird's watchful eye soon caught sight of me ; she swam quickly away, the young scuttling off in all directions and hiding in any available odd kind of place, as only youthful Moor-hens can do. I remained quiet, and presently their tuneful cry, *jō-e, jō-e*, was heard from different directions ; then something that looked like a stone seemed suddenly to come to life ; another emerged apparently from nowhere, while others appeared to come out of the very banks, to swim hither and thither picking up flies or other food from the surface of the water. But "mother," who was still in hiding, showed signs of uneasiness, and called quietly but harshly, *kerra-rek* ; the little ones then hurried towards her, and disappeared underneath a thick bramble bush, the branches of which dipped into the stream. The old bird had evidently told her children to keep quiet ; and thus no amount of patience seemed

likely to bring its reward in my seeing them come out.

What a difficult thing it is to obtain a picture of a Moor-hen on her nest! How I have tried, and tried again, to effect this, but have never been successful, although I have spent more time during the last three nesting seasons over these birds than over all others put together.

Last year there was a nest by a small waterfall on which the hen seemed to sit closely. I placed my camera on some rubbish that had accumulated in the water and covered it over with dead reeds, sticks, and other things, and then retired with the pneumatic tube to the top of a tree, where I thought I should be free from observation, while, at the same time, I should obtain a very good view of all going on below. Some time elapsed, but the Moor-hen would not enter her nest although keeping near. I waited until I was fairly cramped in my uncomfortable position; and patience had almost done her perfect work, when, suddenly, success seemed to be within measurable distance, for the bird was on the point of entering the nest. Just at the critical moment, however, a Wild Duck, with her interesting brood, came flapping over the waterfall and scared my Moor-hen away.

I descended from the tree making sundry vows never to try to photograph a Moor-hen again; but on second thought, and after the stiffness from sitting in the tree had worn off, I decided to try once more, and the next time to hide the camera in another place, while retiring to a distance of about one hundred yards, watching the movements of the bird with a field-glass. On this occasion the Moor-hen herself seemed to find some amusement in swimming round and round, as might have been imagined, for my edification, and, of course, always keeping just out of focus of the camera lens. These movements were continued until it became too dark to expose a plate, so that I removed the camera, leaving the heap of dead grass under which it was placed exactly as it had been.

Before going home I walked a little farther down-stream, and happened to come upon the Wild Duck, which was sitting on the bank with her five ducklings under her wings. I did not disturb her, but returned to the Moor-hen, and then saw that that artful bird was well seated on her nest, with head tucked comfortably under one wing, and apparently as though she had been there for hours instead of only a few minutes! My emotions at that moment were not of the

kind called amiable, but my admiration of the Moor-hen, as a bird of caution and sagacity, was greatly increased.

On one other occasion, after waiting eight hours, and seeing that the Moor-hen was comfortably settled on her nest, and waiting some time longer to allow of her getting quite composed, I attempted



MOOR-HEN ABOUT TO DIVE.

to expose a plate. Just as I squeezed the pneumatic ball, and while the shutter was open, she quickly rose, and the picture was useless.

The photograph of the Moor-hen swimming was secured after eight or ten vain attempts being made, and with this exception all other endeavours

were failures, owing partly to darkness under the shadow of trees. The picture was obtained by very cautiously stalking up to the bird on her nest, which was built under the roots of a tree, and then taking a snap-shot as she left; but as I had to get within three yards before exposing the plate, much caution and patience in approaching were needed.

I have repeatedly roused a roosting Moor-hen from the top of a tall fir-tree, while walking on the borders of the wood of an evening. When thus roused they fly very strongly; but when scared, while on the ground, they seem to have great difficulty in quickly rising, half running and half flying for some distance before they get fairly on the wing.

A friend once informed me of a Moor-hen which used to visit a farmyard during the severe weather, while the fowls were being fed, for the sake of sharing their meal.

Several of the bushes on one side of the stream lean over to the opposite side, and nettles, with other wild plants, grow up and meet the branches; and it is among such tangled vegetation that Thrushes love to build and rear their brood. These nettles grow in large patches along the Brook banks, and offer cover also for numerous

Blackbirds which breed hereabout, building on the ground. About the beginning of June the tall grass and nettles are cut down ; the nests are then sadly exposed, and the sorrow of the parent birds is pitiable to take notice of, for the men who mow this grass take every egg and young bird which they can find.

Last spring I was standing near a nest in a hedge, containing four young Thrushes almost ready to leave, when two of the little things fell out on to the other side, and a dog, which was some distance off, on seeing what had happened, rushed at the two young birds and killed them. One of the parent Thrushes flew at the dog and almost struck it while flying past ; it then flew to me and settled on the ground at my feet, as if imploring me to do something. The cries of both birds were distressing to hear when they saw two of their young thus done to death. I took charge of the other two, and after the dog had been called off I placed them back in their nest ; but on passing later both were gone.

Out of about sixteen nests of Thrushes and Blackbirds, containing their full complement of eggs, that I have known of in one spring, only four were actually reared. This wholesale robbery is carried on chiefly by those men and boys who

take all they can find in the way of eggs. What they do with them all I do not know, but some will thread them on strings and hang them round their cottage wall ; others, owing to superstition, will not allow them to go inside their house, and they are then hung in festoons in a sheltered part



YOUNG THRUSHES.

of the garden. At one farmhouse I knew of in Cambridgeshire, the children of the farmer used to bring in all eggs they found and place them in large pickle-jars, there to remain until some accident destroyed them. Among these there would be some really good eggs, but the best

were broken to pieces, as usually happens in cases like these.

One day I came upon three young urchins in a high state of excitement over a clutch of eggs that they very carefully guarded; they called them "Flycatchers," and after a little persuasion on my part they were induced to show them, and on inspection I found them to be Greenfinches! They were all blown in the usual barbarous fashion, a hole being made at each end usually, while wanting a pin, by a thorn from the hedgerow. No matter what you say to these young barbarians, you cannot cure them of this mania for robbing birds, and they always destroy the nests as well while thieving the eggs.

Richard Jefferies, in one passage, argues in favour of the boys, by asking whatever difference can it make to the hosts of Blackbirds, Thrushes, and Finches by just taking one or two nests? If this was all that really happens it would not be so bad; but in point of fact, small armies of these boys "work" every hedgerow in the neighbourhood, and unless the nests are unusually well concealed all are wantonly destroyed.

CHAPTER IX

WILD DUCK—SCARLET GROSBEAK—KINGFISHER —DESTRUCTION OF BIRDS

IT is not often that a Wild Duck remains on our Brook to breed, although during the winter months many pass over the neighbourhood, and sometimes will stay to feed. Some few years ago a pair of Wild Ducks made an attempt to build and rear a brood on the bank; but one of the farm labourers living near heard of them, and proceeding thither with his gun brutally shot the Duck while she was faithfully sitting on her nest, at the same time destroying this and taking its eight eggs. It is no wonder that when such treatment as this is in store for them that the Ducks go elsewhere to breed. On the second day of July last year, I was pleased to see a Wild Duck, with her brood of five Ducklings,

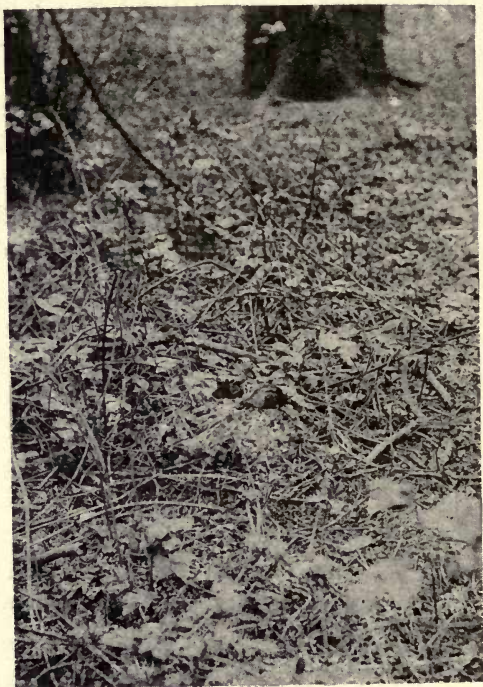
swimming along our Brook. She had happily been successful in hatching her eggs ; but when the young were nearly half grown three of them and their mother disappeared. I was told by a labourer that they had been snared ; which was very probably the case.

Some little distance up-stream a good-sized lake empties its waters into our Brook, and it is here that the Wild Duck breeds regularly. One afternoon last May I managed to obtain a good series of photographs of these, some of which are here reproduced.

On this lake there is an island, thickly wooded, and among last season's dead leaves a Wild Duck's nest was built, composed entirely of down from her own body ! The accompanying picture of her while sitting, is a good illustration of protective colouration. While walking about I accidentally almost trod upon this Duck, so closely did she resemble her surroundings. Retiring a short distance I set up my camera and returned very cautiously, expecting every moment to see her leave the nest, as she was becoming restless ; but I was fortunate enough just to expose the plate in time, as she rose immediately that this feat was accomplished, flying slowly and seeming to half drag herself along the ground. The photograph

strikingly shows what a conspicuous object this nest was as soon as the Duck had left it.

While walking round the lake we saw another



WILD DUCK SITTING. .

Duck hiding in the reeds with several young ones near, two of which we placed on the ground and photographed, meanwhile their efforts to hide

themselves in the short grass being quite diverting, or even comical in the extreme. However pretty a young Wild Duck may prove to be on the water, when placed on land it is otherwise, being awkward or unwieldy. As everybody knows it is even more so with the Swan, which ashore is one of the most perfect feathered "landlubbers" to be found, while on the water it is the acme of symmetry.

There were several other Wild Ducks about in hiding among the reeds; and one of these flew out making a great noise, quacking vigorously, beating the water and splashing with its wings. About half-way across the lake this Duck settled on the water calling to its young, which soon emerged from several unlikely places, and which, when they saw us, made most comical efforts to hide themselves by diving; but as they could remain under water only a few seconds, this was not very effective. I have seen Wild Ducklings dive soon after they had left their eggs, or perhaps more correctly bobbing in and out of the water, in their fruitless endeavours to hide themselves from observation.

This lake belongs to an estate and is surrounded by fields, well wooded with large oaks, and other fine trees. A few years ago no one lived on the

place, and the only birds then to be seen on the water were one or two Moor-hens. To show what a difference protection makes, a friend and myself visited this lake one afternoon a few months after the house had been occupied, and what we then



YOUNG WILD DUCKS.

saw would have made many a sportsman long to be there with his gun. A flock of about twenty Wild Ducks were quietly swimming about; numbers of Coots were also there, with Moor-hens to be seen in abundance. Two Herons were standing knee-deep on the margin of the reeds, and one of

these, on catching sight of us, with its keen, watchful eye, immediately called loudly *fraank, fraank*, this



WILD DUCK HIDING.

being understood by all the birds within hearing as a timely warning. The Ducks rose in a body and

were quickly out of sight, soon leaving the Herons, as they more slowly flapped along, far behind; Coots and Moor-hens rose on all sides, calling loudly and flying to a place of hiding. For a few seconds there was an indescribable confusion of bird-cries, the meaning of which we seemed to understand; then all was quiet, and any one coming on the scene when the commotion had subsided, would not have thought that a few seconds before the surface of the water had been alive with swimming and diving birds.

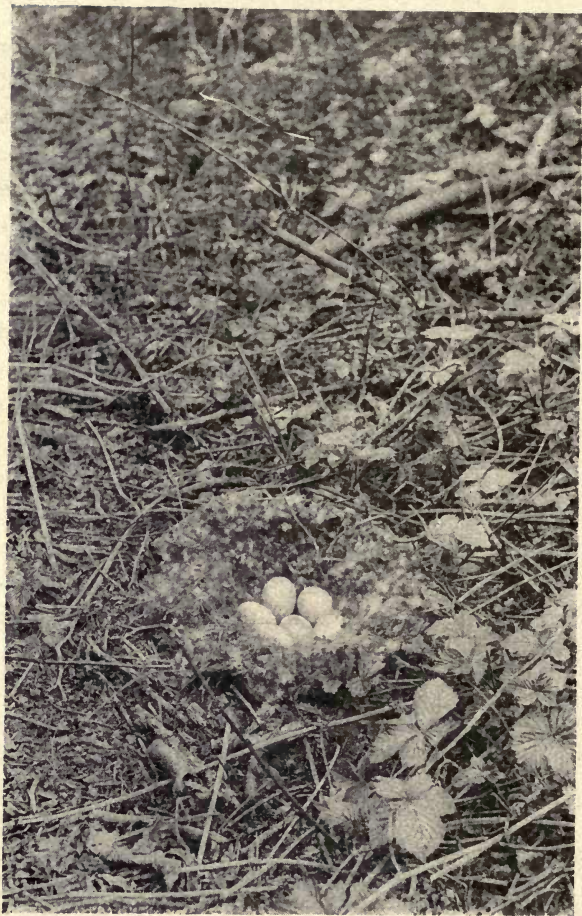
It was on the margin of the lake mentioned, that three years ago we saw a Scarlet Grosbeak feeding among some small birds, probably Finches, but we were too intent on watching the Grosbeak to take much notice of any others. When one of a rare species like this shows itself in this country, the bare statement that it has been seen is not, as a rule, considered of sufficient weight to justify its being registered amongst the specimens already recorded. Two only, I believe, have previously been recorded as having been seen in this country. Proof is asked for; and we are expected to show the specimen; but as we had no gun, and as other observers may have been similarly circumstanced, this demand becomes impossible of being complied with. Both my friend and I had each a field-glass,

and we watched the Grosbeak's movements for some time at the distance of ten yards. The bright red body appeared remarkably vivid in its colours against the green grass ; but especially was this the case when it rose to fly away with the others ; and it was then that the strong rays of the sun made it resemble a bird clothed in blood-red feathers. We waited some time hoping it might return ; but we saw no more of the interesting stranger which flew on to the island and remained there.

But to return to our Brook ; one of the birds which may always be seen there is the Kingfisher.

The bank has fallen away in places forming miniature bays, where, sheltered by trees and thick undergrowth, the Kingfisher loves to sit. I knew of one such secluded spot last summer where one of this species might be seen almost on any evening, always sitting on the same small twig, about eighteen inches above the water. Many a pilgrimage with a field-glass have I made to this spot.

Let us watch this engaging little bird as he sits on a branch over the water. When we first catch sight of his brilliant colours he is preening his feathers ; but this continues for only a short time, for a movement in the water causes him to bend



WILD DUCK.

down his head to watch eagerly what is going on under the surface ; then, quick as a flash, he disappears, a splash in the water showing the spot where he dived. In a second he rises with his prey, but instead of flying straight to a perch, a flight round above the water is made, the fish being swallowed meanwhile. Returning to a perch, the Kingfisher now continues preening his gay feathers, the plumage as it is ruffled seeming to change colour, now being a vivid green, then becoming a brilliant blue, still changing yet again to another tint of green ; and so this pleasing scene goes on until a Blackbird, on spying us, loudly calls his notes of alarm and frightens the Kingfisher away. In passing like a flash, the bright-coloured bird seems almost to leave a train of azure blue in its track, so bright are the colours in the sunbeams.

While engaged in writing a portion of these notes, seated on the banks of our Brook on a quiet summer afternoon, I was startled by a loud splash in the water beneath, and looking down to learn what had happened I spied a Kingfisher just leaving the water with a small fish. This was swallowed, as is often the case, while fluttering above the water ; but while so doing, to my great surprise the bird flew directly towards me, and, judging by its very brilliant plumage, I conjectured

it must be a male. At first it seemed that he might settle on my lap ; but choosing the stem of a dock plant on my left and slightly lower down, he settled comfortably on that. The fish taken had no doubt been rather large, for the bird gave one or two gulps, half opening his beak as if choking. All inconvenience was soon overcome, however, and then it was necessary to settle down to enjoy a quiet rest. After drawing in his head, ruffling up his feathers, giving himself a good shaking, the bird closed his eyes and apparently went to sleep ; this gave me the opportunity of taking breath, and moving so as to have a better view of such an interesting visitor. In a few minutes his eyes opened, and I seemed to be noticed for the first time. Sitting up and opening his eyes wider, the bird gazed steadily at me for a while, first with one eye, then with both. My writing-paper seemed to attract attention ; then, with head on one side, in quite a coquettish manner, he looked up and our eyes met. I could hardly help smiling in response, but knowing that if I moved a muscle my coy visitor would be off, I remained quite still. At length the Kingfisher moved his head round, and seemed to be taking stock of me from head to foot, after looking well at my papers. As I remained motionless the bird may have thought that I was a

tree or a plant, or some other harmless thing in Nature, for he again turned his head away to indulge in another short sleep.

The Kingfisher's back was now turned towards me, and a beautiful bird indeed he showed himself to be, while sitting there with the sun shining on his plumage, an occasional slight movement causing the brilliant colours to change from blue to green and *vice versâ*. Having finished the second short nap, the little bird again shook himself and proceeded to preen his feathers, every now and then stopping in this process to look at me. This was a remarkably pretty study, especially when the bird spread out one wing while finishing his toilet.

These necessary duties were finished in a few minutes, and he then seemed to desire to take a good look about. Turning round on his perch and facing me, my visitor was possibly again hungry ; for he now flew on to a small branch, and with head bent downward, looked intently at the water about four feet below. In this position he remained for about ten minutes, and had now become so accustomed to my presence that a movement of my head had no disturbing effect. I particularly wished to see him dive for a fish ; but an unwelcome little barking dog came along a footpath not far

off, and jumped into the stream just as my Kingfisher was on the point of diving, thus frightening him away. I waited some time thinking he might return, but to no purpose.

Just before the Kingfisher arrived, a little shrew had been playing near just below, and running up the thick grass stems. Then a Thrush came and sat at my feet, undecided whether it would have a bath ; and meanwhile was startled by a slight movement on my part. In a few minutes a water-vole swam across the stream and sat on the bank.

These little animals seem to be paralysed, as it were, by any sudden noise or movement, so that such a phenomenon ensures their remaining stationary and quiet ; and knowing this, I managed to get one or two pictures of them one afternoon. There was some little difficulty in focussing, but I overcame this by focussing a certain spot in their runs and waiting until they came into it. The instant they reached this place, I set up the most alarming noise possible, jumped about, waved my arms, and doing any other thing that occurred to me as likely to serve the purpose, and by such means I was able to give the needful ten seconds exposure. It was a dull afternoon ; the poor voles, not seeming to know which way to turn, remained

still during the long exposure. Needless to say, that as soon as their services were no longer required, they hied away for their lives at full speed, and one could not but commend them for thus retreating.

These pleasant little adventures that I enjoyed during this one summer afternoon—the time seemed to be all too short—showed how much can be seen of Wild Nature and her inhabitants in the countryside by merely sitting down, remaining still, and waiting with an observant, open eye. If any one would profitably study the habits of our field and wood animals, as well as birds in their own wild homes, it is indispensable to keep absolutely quiet. I once had that wary little animal the weasel come and sit at my feet while reclining on a sloping bank. Although I was not hidden, there the interesting visitor remained, it even sniffed my boots; but simply blinking my eyes seemed to send it off. How quickly they can hide themselves when they think there is danger near is often proved, for I jumped up as soon as it ran off and searched in the grass patch where it had seemed to go, but there was no weasel there, nor did I see it again.

On another occasion, while lying at full length in the heather on a moor in the New Forest,

watching the movements of a bird, some wild rabbits came and sat near, and commenced to nibble the young grass shoots that were found there. Not the slightest notice did they take as long as I remained perfectly still ; but as darkness was coming on, I was compelled to move, and the rabbits rushed away in all directions in great alarm the instant that my head was raised.

The Kingfisher has always been associated with a certain amount of superstition. The ancients supposed that it built upon the ocean, but as a storm would quickly have destroyed such a nest, the bird was supposed to be endowed with powers to quiet the waves while hatching her eggs ; and during this period, the water, out of kindness, remained calm, while the mariner was able to venture forth with perfect safety. Hence, this tranquil period became known as Halcyon days.

“ Expect Saint Martin's summer, Halcyon days.”

SHAKESPEARE, *Henry VI.*, Part i., Act i., Sc. 2.

The dead body of the bird was supposed to protect persons from thunder, while it preserved the peace of the family that possessed one.

The skin preserved with outstretched wings, and carefully balanced by a single thread from the back, was also supposed to point its beak in the direction

from which the wind blew. Marlow, in his "Jew of Malta," says :—

"But how now stands the wind ?
Into what corner peers my Halcyon's bill ?"

In more recent times we read of people who believed that the breast of the Kingfisher would always point to the north if the bird was suspended by a thread ; while the Tartars preserve the skin and carry it about their persons as a charm against accidents or disease. These people also believed that the feathers had some magic power in securing a woman's love.

Enormous numbers of these beautiful birds are slaughtered each year to gratify the cravings of such women as wear feathers in their hats. At one sale in London, that came under my notice, nine hundred Kingfisher skins were offered, besides two hundred and sixty thousand other gay-plumaged birds, and forty-nine thousand six hundred ounces of "Osprey" feathers !

Of course the majority of the Kingfisher skins are procured abroad ; but still, many of our native birds are ruthlessly slaughtered to serve the purpose of feminine adornment. I have heard women, while wearing feathers of rare birds in their hats, discourse on the cruelty of shooting, and yet

they themselves, it may be innocently, are the cause of more misery and disaster amongst the feathered tribes than all the sportsmen in the world.

The Little Egret, from which the "Osprey" plumes are obtained, is an instance of the terrible suffering undergone by birds to gratify those who favour a wicked fashion. I do not believe that any right-minded women, if they were to see or read about some of the cruelties practised by the collectors, would ever encourage such abominations by buying and wearing feathers. The accounts we read about these cruelties are hard to believe as possible in these times; but when we consider that they are written by men who would not swerve from the truth to make them sound pathetic, we realise what agony the poor birds undergo.

Just two instances may be given. Mr. Gilbert Pearson at the World's Congress on Ornithology, held at Chicago in 1897, in speaking about Osprey plumes said: "I visited a large colony of Herons on Horse Hummock (Central Florida), on April 27, 1888. Several hundred pairs were nesting there at the time. . . . While quite close to the breeding-grounds, I climbed a tall gum tree and was able, unobserved by the birds, to survey the scene at leisure. . . . Three years later I again

visited the herony of Horse Hummock found the old gum, and climbed among its branches ; but the scene had changed. Not a Heron was visible. The call had come from northern cities for greater quantities of Heron plumes for millinery. The plume-hunter had discovered the colony, and a few shattered nests were all that was left to tell of the once populous colony. The few surviving tenants, if there were any, had fled in terror to the recesses of wilder swamps. Wearily I descended from the tree, to find among the leaves and mould the crumbling bones of the slaughtered birds.

" A few miles north of Waldo, in the flat pine region, our party came one day upon a little swamp where we had been told that Herons bred in numbers. Upon approaching the place the screaming of young birds reached our ears. The cause of this soon became apparent by the buzzing of green flies and the heaps of dead Herons festering in the sun, with the back of each bird raw and bleeding. The smouldering embers of a camp-fire bore witness of the recent presence of the plume-hunter. Under a bunch of grass a dead Heron was discovered, from whose back the plumes had been torn. The ground was still moist with its blood, showing that death had not long before taken place. The dirt had been beaten smooth

with its wings, its neck was arched, the feathers on its head were raised and its bill was buried in the blood-clotted feathers of its breast, where a gaping wound showed that the leaden missile had struck. It was an awful picture of pain. Sorely wounded this Heron had crawled away, and after enduring hours of agony had died, the victim of a foolish passion. Young Herons had been left by scores in the nests to perish from exposure and starvation. These little sufferers, too weak to rise, reached their heads over the nest and faintly called for the food which the dead mothers could never bring.

“It is bad to see such sights from any cause, but, when all this is done merely to gratify fashionable women’s vanity, it becomes still worse. These are but *instances* of the destruction of bird-life. Unless something is done to stop this awful slaughter it is only a question of a few years before the Herons not only of Florida but of the whole world will be exterminated.”

Mr. Howard Saunders says of our sea-birds:—

“These birds have been slaughtered under circumstances of horrible barbarity, to provide adornments for ladies’ hats. I have watched, day after day, a flotilla of boats procuring plumes for the market: one gang of men shooting, and

changing their guns when too hot ; another set picking up the birds, and often cutting their wings off and flinging their victims into the sea, to struggle with feet and head until death slowly came to their relief ; and I have seen the cliffs absolutely 'spotted' with the fledglings which have died of starvation, owing to the destruction of their parents. And it may be accounted unto me for righteousness that, in my indignation, I hove down rocks whenever such an act would interfere with the shooters."

It will be seen by these two instances, out of hundreds of others that could be quoted, what suffering is caused by this demand for "Murderous Millinery" as it has rightly been called ; to show what destruction is wrought to supply this demand 35,000,000 of birds' skins are *annually* imported into England, and as the majority of these are in their breeding plumage, it means the death by starvation of hundreds of thousands of nestlings which call for food until death takes them out of their misery ; and they may cry until death comes, for "mother" will never return to them

CHAPTER X

HERON—TEAL—WAGTAILS—SEDGE-WARBLER—
REED-BUNTING—LESSER WHITETHROAT—
GREENFINCH — CHAFFINCH — GOLDCREST—
BIRD-LAND IN WINTER

GREAT numbers of Starlings and other small birds fly to the bushes that fringe the Brook, there to roost, the Starlings, as usual, having a deal to say, and pecking and pushing each other in their endeavours to get a favourable perch. All these are silent at length, and the Blackbirds in the ditches, under the hedge, have even given up their loud calls ; the last song of the Redbreast is also heard as he enters the wood ; the moon can be dimly seen through the woodland trees, and a quietness seems to hang over both water and land.

This is the time that the Heron loves to fre-

quent the stream of our Brook, and during the summer months one may often be seen hereabout if, as an observer, we are wary in our movements. It requires a very keen-sighted person indeed to catch sight of this noble bird before it sees us. At night I have only seen the Heron rise from the margin of the water ; and what a great size it appeared to be while slowly flapping its great wings soon to be lost sight of in the haze !

On a foggy morning I once came upon a Heron standing knee-deep in the water ; it looked like an object carved in stone, so motionless did it stand, with the long neck folded back, and head bent down watching the water. What a fine picture this would have made ! but most of such opportunities usually occur when one's camera is at home. I had a field-glass, however, and thus enjoyed a splendid view of the bird for a few minutes ; but not finding anything to satisfy hunger at that spot it stood up, slowly stretched its wings and legs, and then flew lazily towards me, passing quite close without apparently taking any notice.

While taking a quiet ramble before breakfast one spring morning, my attention was attracted by a great noise which came from the direction of the stream, the cause of which was presently

seen to be several Rooks and a Heron, all of which rose above the tree-tops to have a "set to" in mid-air. The Heron easily kept above its



HERONS AT NEST.

pursuers, and kept them at bay with its more powerful beak ; but what the Rooks failed to do in the way of striking their enemy, they made up

for most liberally in the way of noise. The Heron occasionally joined in with its harsh *fraank*; and then, suddenly, as though a truce had been agreed upon, all flew away to a large oak not far away and settled amongst its branches, remaining there peacefully for some time.

I believe that a pair of Herons bred at Winchmore Hill last spring—the exact spot I will not mention as it might tell against their interests. The nest was not discovered until the middle of May, and then it was forsaken; but I had frequently seen a pair of Herons near this spot for some time previously. As a rule Herons are gregarious in their habits, a single nest being seldom met with. I hope that this one mentioned may be an exception, and that the founding of a Heronry in our district may actually come to pass.

The Teal is sometimes to be seen on the Brook; but this very seldom happens, for it is three years since a pair last visited us. I had hoped that they would escape the notice of any one with a gun; but such was not to be their fate, for they had only been there about a fortnight when they were met with on a Sunday morning by a farm labourer, who shot them both and sold them for five shillings, and they now adorn the

parlour of a neighbouring public-house. Such is the fate of nearly all the more rare kinds of birds that visit our suburbs; and all of this wanton destruction could be prevented by the owners of the surrounding land extending to them a little more protection.

No stream such as our Brook, would be complete without Wagtails. Three kinds—the Pied, Yellow, and Grey—are to be seen near the stream at times, the Pied being by far the most common. Although it breeds with us every year, I have never found a nest of this species; and unless one sees them enter or leave their nest it is almost impossible to find them by mere searching. I have, on different occasions, spent much time watching these Pied Wagtails in order to discover the locality of their nest, but have never seen them enter or come out. On one occasion the male watched me, and continued to do so until I left the spot.

If one has a chance of watching these little birds without attracting their notice, it is a sight well worth seeing. For long one can hear their approach by their familiar cry, *tiz-it, tiz-it*; but on looking up, we do not at first see any bird at all; but presently one is observed coming with an undulating flight, and seeming to shoot itself

through the air at each rise, then dropping slightly, and then, at intervals of some seconds, the note is repeated. When near the spot it wishes to reach, it will drop quickly in a slanting direction, flying several yards beyond ; then, giving a sudden twist in the air, will skim along the surface of the ground and settle on the place it has already passed.

The part of the stream to which our bird has flown is partly dried up, and small islands covered with short grass are formed, making an ideal feeding-ground for such inhabitants. Let us stalk up to these islands, carefully keeping behind the bushes where we shall not be seen, and where we can still hear the bird's note ; for now it has settled, a note is still uttered at intervals. There seems to be plenty of food on the islands, for as soon as we catch sight of the bird we see it walking elegantly about and busily feeding. How dignified is its whole bearing, as it walks from island to island ; not hopping across as some birds might do, but walking over the weeds on the surface of the water, or wading across in more shallow parts where there are no weeds. How gracefully is the little well-formed head held up, while it moves backwards and forward with each movement caused by walking ! and when standing

still the tail is wagged up and down in a pleasing manner.

As soon as hunger is satisfied the Wagtail commences to preen its feathers; and having finished this, and taking a good look round at itself, it seems suddenly to become conscious that



YELLOW WAGTAIL.

numbers of flies are overhead, and without more waste of time commences to catch these, hawking for them in a way worthy of a Spotted Flycatcher, but looking extremely comical. Seemingly the bird turns many summersaults, more resembling, meanwhile, a little bundle of feathers being

dangled by a string than a live thing; and it repeats these evolutions for a considerable time, returning to the ground every few seconds. At length it seems to have had enough of this kind of food, and so flies away, gradually rising up until it reaches a certain height and is soon lost sight of in the sky.

In a quiet seaside town where I am now writing, several Pied Wagtails frequent the gardens on each day. Quite lately I have been watching these from a distance of a few yards, while they were feeding on a lawn amongst several Starlings, which they did not seem to fear in any degree, although the Starlings appeared to be very quarrelsome among themselves.

When the tide recedes it leaves a fringe of seaweed at high-water mark, and the Pied Wagtails can be seen searching among this almost any day. With a field-glass I have watched for them; but at first could not discover the whereabouts of a bird, although the cry of *tiz-it* seemed to come from a different direction each time that it was uttered. At last I discovered one to be sitting on a small projection of chalk a few yards up the cliff, where it was amusing itself by trying to sing. There is not much music in its song, given as it is in a jerky manner; and the call-note *tiz-it* seems

to be the chief note, the others being merely variations of this.

In a few moments the bird left its perch and flew on to the sands near the seaweed, walking along the side and peering into and underneath the heaps. Every now and then, leaving the seaweed, it would run with extreme rapidity nearer to the water, picking up something that caught its eye, and then return slowly again towards the seaweed. It had a habit of spinning round very quickly on its feet if it saw anything eatable behind, and so often did it do this, that at times the effect was almost comical. But this is a digression.

In the hedges that fringe the banks of our Brook many of the smaller kinds of birds will build ; and in places these bushes are so thick, and are so overgrown with woodbine and brambles, that it is impossible to penetrate into them. Hence birds which choose such places for nesting always rear their young in safety, as the nests are never found by the army of birds-nesting boys that infest the neighbourhood.

At one time Sedge-Warblers used to breed in one of these places ; but the bushes they nested in have recently been cut down and the birds have not returned.

In early spring flocks of Reed-Buntings haunt these bushes ; but I have not seen them during the time that they should be building, so that they probably go elsewhere for nesting.

One of our Warblers—the Lesser Whitethroat—seems very fond of building in the bushes on



YOUNG LESSER WHITETHROAT.

the banks of the stream. This bird can readily be distinguished from the more common, or Greater Whitethroat, by the slight tinge of pink on the breast feathers. When they first arrive in this country this distinctive mark is very conspicuous, but after a few weeks' stay in our climate this seems to disappear to some extent. Whether

they undergo a spring moult after their arrival with us I cannot say, but I have seen them later in the season, when feeding their young, with hardly a vestige of this rose-tinge remaining.

They make a very slight nest of dried grasses and horsehair; and some specimens I have found have been so fragile that it was possible to see the eggs from underneath. The photograph of the young bird was obtained soon after it had left the nest; but before I was able to take it I had a rare chase along the hedgerow, or until the bird left the hedge and flew on to a fruit tree in an adjoining orchard, when by walking up very cautiously I was able to expose a plate successfully. The fledgling then joined its parents in the thick bushes.

Numerous Greenfinches and Chaffinches breed along the banks of the Brook in the bushes. While passing a nest of the latter species one day, I noticed that both birds were in a state of extreme excitement, and the cause soon became apparent when it was seen, that one of their young brood had fallen into the water and was fluttering about for dear life. My attempting a rescue only caused the fluttering to increase; but the other bank was soon reached, and the little fellow climbed up, not much the worse for

a bath by way of adventure. The one in the illustration was sitting a short distance away from



YOUNG CHAFFINCH.

the nest, and thus allowed me to take the photograph without showing any strong signs of fear.

Afterwards I searched round for some suitable food to offer by way of refreshment, but though I found a few insects, the bird continued to gaze stolidly at me as though I was some strange apparition, and refused to take anything that I offered.

The nest of the Chaffinch is one of the most beautiful it is possible to see, usually being made to resemble its surroundings, although this is not always the case, as the photograph shows. The nest pictured was built in a willow bush in very early spring, and outside was composed of white lichens, which gave it the appearance of a snow-ball when seen from a short distance. Not a branch was disarranged before the photograph was taken, so that it will be seen what a prominent object it was amid its darker surroundings.

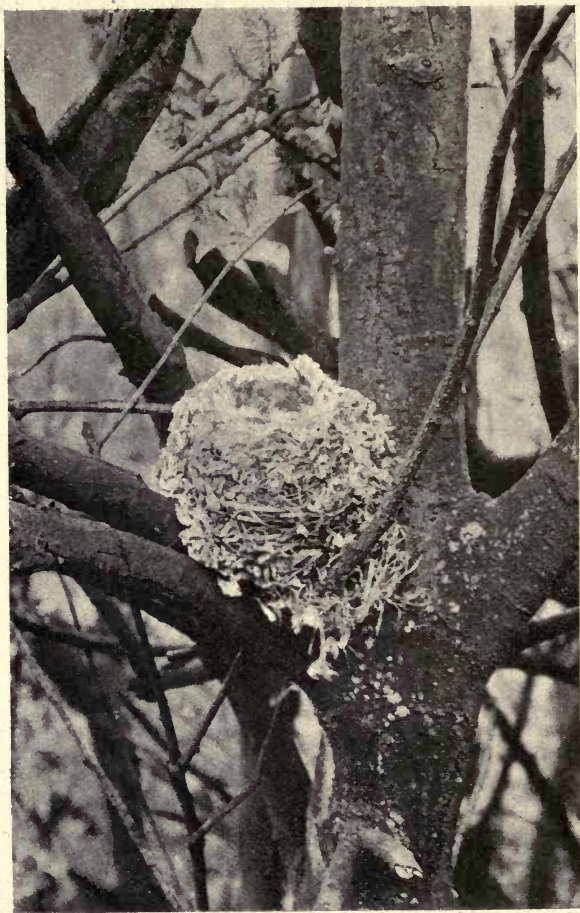
A pair of Chaffinches showed more commonplace taste when they discarded the usual lichens altogether, and used small pieces of newspaper with which to ornament their nest; and as this was placed in the middle of a thick hawthorn bush, standing in a dark corner, the white paper dotted about the nest made it more attractive than it would otherwise have been. The birds could not have used this material to make their nest harmonise with its surroundings, as the

majority of Chaffinches apparently really endeavour to do.

The Brook in winter presents a very sombre contrast to what it is in spring and summer, when gay butterflies flit along the banks and over the surface of the stream ; when gaudy Kingfishers are also seen darting past the banks overgrown with sweet-scented flowers of many colours. The trees, bushes, and dead flower-stalks, which not long ago were so full of the beauty of life, are now clothed by the touch of winter in a mantle of frost. In one sense they are still beautiful, however, although so different from what they were in the brighter days of summer.

The bushes immediately over the stream are the most striking ; for these, before the water was frozen, received more dampness than others farther into the meadows. The hawthorn, for the second time in the year, is sprinkled over with white ; but it is frost instead of may, and the most beautiful of crystals in many fantastic shapes ornament its branches.

The glade in the wood, where the Chiffchaff used to call throughout the day, is now transformed into a veritable fairy-bower, with pretty Blue Titmice for its native fairies, and some of which are searching for food underneath the larger



CHAFFINCH.

boughs of trees, where the hoar-frost is not so thick. Others are seen to climb the dead nettle-stalks, and send down little showers of snow-crystals as they move about. Following these, and uttering their shrill *zee-zee-zee*, are tiny Goldcrests, the males showing their deep golden crests, while the hens can be distinguished by these feathers being of a pale lemon colour. In the glade stands the bush that the Blackcap used to sing upon; and now there is a Chaffinch sitting on one of the frost-covered branches, the Blackcap having left to bask in continual summer among green groves and flowers and warmth of the sunny South.

What a charming life it would be if we, like the summer Warblers, could always live in spring and summer, among flowers and flitting butterflies and darting dragon-flies, and where birds are always singing! It must be a perfect life. The dull days must come, however; and like the Chaffinch in the frost, we know that they will pass, and that the first thaw after winter is a harbinger or promise of spring. If only we had the contentment of birds, how much of worrying it would save us!

Take the contented Goldcrests, for instance. Those in the fairy glade were perhaps reared in

Eastern Europe. What induced them to come over here, to cross the wide tracts of land and the cold North Sea, that must have seemed to such birds—which are not much bigger than large walnuts—an almost unending passage? But at last the shore of England was sighted, and they knew that they had reached their haven; but how? What power told them so? Instinct, it is said. They knew that they had to come, and that the land and sea had to be passed, and they ventured forth knowing not whither they were going; and yet these tiny travellers knew when their journey was ended, and faith induced them to keep on.

What a tale of woe they could tell if they could only speak! How the winds blew them out of their course; how they saw a bright light in the distance, and flew thitherwards as to a haven reached at last; but it was only a lightship, and against which a number flew to get killed by the glass. Then at last the shore of England was reached, and the travellers, exhausted, sought cover among the nearest bushes and searched for food that they had not tasted for so long. Truly God cares for the birds!

We, like the Goldcrests, have a good hope during these dull winter days; we know that the

butterflies will return, and that the merry Warblers will sing again when the spring returns. We know that the Blackcap will then pour forth his loud, wild notes from the bush by the stream. The fairy bower will then be turned into a yet more beautiful palace, with yet more beautiful inhabitants, and what will make it perfect will be the music of the Warblers of the wood.

In winter, hunger makes all birds tame, and it is possible to get quite close to some which are of the wildest at ordinary times; those that under happier circumstances would not allow any one to approach within a hundred yards of them, can now be seen from only a few yards' distance. The Redwings and Fieldfares have taken themselves to the thick hawthorn bushes that grow over the stream, and are searching among the frost-clad branches, for the bright red berries which form their staple diet during this hard time, and the ice beneath is covered with husks of these berries.

The Kingfisher returns to the same perch day after day. For some reason the water in this place, which, with its white surroundings, looks quite black, does not freeze, but the poor bird sits over it with feathers ruffled, looking anything but contented. To suppose that the Kingfisher always

lives on fish is a mistake, as insects form a part of its diet. I have seen it among trees away from water, where it was probably feeding.

If we wish to see the bushes by the stream in the height of winter beauty, our visit must be made soon after sunrise; for when the sun is higher in the heavens many of the delicate crystals melt, and the birds knock a quantity of them off the branches.

Small families of Long-Tailed Titmice climb about the slender branches of pollarded willows, while the small brown Wren searches among the rugged bark, and peers into and enters the numerous holes which are everywhere on these trees. When insect food is scarce, Wrens, unlike some other birds, never starve, owing to an industrious habit of looking into all the little crevices, and in this way finding many hidden insects that others, less keen, might overlook.

During certain very cold winters that I have known, I have found many insect-eating birds dead, being literally starved, owing to the insufficiency of their supplies. Birds do not die of cold, as is sometimes supposed to be the case. Their feathers, being a bad conductor of heat, preserve a high temperature of the body. This temperature ranges from 106° to 112° Fahr., ex-

ceeding that of other animals by from 8° to 14°. The clothing of feathers also guards against the ill-effects of sudden variation of temperature, which certain birds in their extensive flights necessarily pass through.

During the very cold winters, which in Britain are happily few and far between, the birds must have suffered terribly. We read of the Thames being covered with ice in the year 1664, sixty-one inches thick, and of great numbers of birds having perished.

John Evelyn, in speaking about his garden during the severe winter of 1683-84, says: "I need say nothing of holly, yew, box, juniper, &c., hardy and spontaneous to our country; and yet, to my grief again, I find an holly standard, of near one hundred years old, drooping, and of doubtful aspect; and a very beautiful hedge, though, indeed, much younger, being clipped about Michaelmas, is mortified near a foot beneath the top, and in some places to the very ground; so as there is nothing seems proof against such a winter, which is late cut and exposed. . . . The vines have escaped; and of the esculent plants and sallads, most, except artichokes, which are universally lost; and, what I prefer before any sallad whatever, eaten raw when young, my sampier is all

rotted to the very root. How to repair my loss I know not, for I could never make any of the seed which came from the rock sampier (though mine were of the very kind) to grow. The aborescent and other sedums, aloes, &c., though housed, perished with me; but the yucca and opuntia escaped. Tulips, many are lost, and so the Constantinople narcissus, and such tuberosæ as were not kept in the chimney-corner, where was continual fire. Some anemonies appear, but I believe many are rotted; but I have made no great search in the flowery parterre; only I find that most capillaries spring, and other humble and repent plants, notwithstanding all this rigorous season. My tortoise, which, by his constant burying himself in the earth at approach of winter, I looked upon as a kind of plant-animal, happening to be obstructed by a vine-root from mining to the depth he was usual wont to inter, is found stark-dead, after having many years escaped the severest winter. Of fish I have lost very few; and the nightingales, which for being a short-winged bird and so exceedingly fat at the time of the year, we commonly suppose them to change the climate, whereas, indeed, they are then hardly able to flee an hundred yards, are as brisk and frolic as ever; nor do I think they alter their summer stations,

whatever become of them all winter. I know not yet of any body who has given tolerable satisfaction in this particular, amongst our ornithologists."

We find this reference made of the winter of 1709, known in history as the Cold Winter: "All the rivers and lakes were frozen, and even the sea for several miles from the shore. The ground was frozen nine feet deep. Birds and beasts were struck dead in the fields, and men perished by thousands in their houses. In the south of France the vine plantations were almost destroyed, nor have they even yet recovered that fatal disaster. The Adriatic Sea was frozen, and even the Mediterranean about Genoa; and the citron and orange groves suffered extremely in the finest parts of Italy."

While walking near water during the short twilight of a winter evening, the atmosphere sometimes shows a very curious phenomenon which it is difficult to describe, but which is as though a piece of misty glass were held before the eyes, slightly obstructing the view. When there is no frost this is still more noticeable, and probably the dampness of the air causes this curious effect, although it differs from common fog. I have noticed it more when the weather has been particularly clear,

It is at evening, soon after sunset, that Moorhens will leave the water to go into the woods and fields where they will wander about, sometimes approaching quite close to dwelling-houses. Then when the surrounding country is wrapt in stillness, Wild Ducks will splash about in pools wherein the water is not frozen. When, however, these retire, there is hardly a solitary sound of life to be heard ; for all nature, during the long, cold winter night, seems to be asleep, and to be patiently waiting for the warm and fruitful days of summer, which, in due course, will come round again to revive our spirits and to give joy to the birds.

PART IV

SOME NORFOLK BIRDS



CHAPTER XI

THE BEARDED TIT



ON the 27th of last May a small river yacht set sail from a picturesque village in Norfolk, having on board three field naturalists and myself, each being provided with a camera and the accessories, the aim being to study and photograph wild life in that part of the Eastern Counties. We decided on

this mode of travelling because it seemed to be the best way of seeing the varied bird-life of the Norfolk Broads more especially.

It was at first not easy to find a yacht suitable for our purpose, one having room enough to afford sleeping accommodation for four persons, and also leaving space for our cameras and a large supply of plates and the necessary extras. At last a suitable boat was found bearing the appropriate name of the *Reed Bird*. The first thing to do was to learn which was the best locality to go to ; and as we had only a limited time at our disposal, we wished to find a part frequented by as many birds as possible. Our man in attendance thought he could show us the best place to anchor for the first night; and as he said that there was some Reed Pheasants, as they call the Bearded Tit, to be seen about there, we decided to take his advice. The spot selected proved to be about the best part we could have chosen for our purpose, for such a great variety of bird-life was to be seen on every side, that we remained there for the greater part of the time allotted for our stay in Norfolk.

I will not mention local names, nor exactly point out any particular locality, in order not to imperil the interests of the birds alluded to in these chapters, not wishing to prompt any eager col-

lectors to visit that favoured quarter. Although we are ourselves egg-collectors in a judicious way, we resolved before starting that if we had the good fortune to find any Bearded Tits' Nests, or other birds' nests equally rare, we would not take even one of their eggs, feeling that such birds are already sufficiently rare, and that if ever they became actually extinct in this country—as indeed was rumoured to be the case with the Bearded Tit a few years ago—we should not be responsible for having hastened that calamity.

After anchoring for the night we went for a short row in the punts, two of which we had with us. Before we had proceeded many hundred yards, we were delighted by hearing the unmistakable note of the Bearded Tit from the middle of an extensive reed-bed; and presently we saw a pair with their brood flying from reed to reed. These soon disappeared among the clusters of reed-clumps which were tall and thick in that part of the marsh. Afterwards we found several Sedge-Warblers' nests, these being very common; the birds, together with the Reed-Warbler, could be heard singing all around.

On June 1st we discovered the first Bearded Tit's nest in a thick bed of reeds growing in deep water, and containing five eggs. This was made of

a very few flat grass-blades, and thickly lined with the flower of the reed, and had just one feather



BEARDED TIT.

interwoven in the side. It was placed quite near the surface of the water, being raised about eight inches by a thick layer of dead sedge which

served the purpose of a support. The nest was not fastened to the reeds in any way, but was simply built in a hollow in the clump, relying on the surrounding stems for support.

A curious thing in connection with the occupants was that they were both "bob-tailed." At first we thought that the hen alone lacked a tail, but after watching for some time it was found that each had its tail missing. Both birds were very cautious while returning to their quarters; they would enter the reeds some little distance off, pass from reed to reed until quite close to the nest, then keep in the thickest parts while creeping, mouse-like, on to the eggs. The cock did a fair amount of sitting; the hen remained hard by, and would repeatedly mount a tall reed, and sound her characteristic note *chiang*, which is musical, and much resembles the tone of a mandoline-string.

There was a Swan's old nest near the Bearded Tit's, which made an excellent place for a photographer to sit with his camera; but owing to the denseness of the reeds just round about there, very few successful pictures could be obtained. A better place to hide with a camera was in the large clump of reeds in which the nest was placed, although it was nothing like so comfortable as the Swan's nest; for although a seat could be formed

of matted reeds, one would be up to the knees in black water, which also gradually oozed through the reeds, thus making it a more than damp coign of observation.

I went to this place one morning with a comrade hoping to take photographs of the sitting bird ; but as there was room for one only on the stand we utilised, we agreed to watch in turn of about an hour each, if, indeed, the bird did not return sooner, the other, meanwhile, having to remain within call a few yards off in the punt. It fell to my lot to take that first turn, so I had to remain patient and hopeful in the little boat with the temperature at 80° in the shade—which, by the way, could not be found on the open water. I had been musing for some minutes, and then a slight rustling in the reeds, near at hand, was heard, and on peering through the stems, a cock Bearded Tit could be seen moving about and making way towards the centre of the clump. There it remained, and as the rustling ceased, I concluded that a Bearded Tit must have built there, and on moving the reeds gently aside with an oar, my conjecture proved to be correct, for there was a nest containing four eggs. I brought up the punt alongside, and found that by placing the camera on a stool, used as a seat, the lens would be raised just about the right

height, and I was thus able to focus the nest. I waited expectantly for either of the Tits to enter ; but they did not apparently like the appearance of the "big round eye" as the lens must have appeared to them. Over the side of the boat I saw that they seemed determined not to return, although they kept on creeping round about in the reeds at the back of their nest.

At this point patience had done its work in the case of my friend at the other nest, for the birds there did not seem likely to return at all, so that he thought there was nothing to be done but to go back to our yacht. But as I had decided to remain all day, if need be, I soon returned with some necessary supplies of food.

The camera was again placed in position, and I lay at full length in the punt, so that the birds should see no more of me than was possible. In or about an hour the hen came close enough for a snap-shot to be taken of her as she sat on a reed, while the cock, meanwhile, was sitting quietly on the other side of the clump. Each time the hen came near, after just looking into the nest, she mounted a tall reed-stem, and then, with a loud fluttering, flew away with her mate, calling *chiang, chiang, chiang*, until they had reached a distance of about twenty yards ; then they again entered

the reeds, and in about a quarter of an hour I either saw or heard them creeping quietly up, keeping in the thickest parts until the nest was reached, which they still hesitated to enter.

During the succeeding five hours I was able to take three snap-shots of the hen, and one of the cock as they passed the nest, not one of which really proved to be a success.

Another nest containing a brood of five was discovered on this same day by one of our party, and this was within ten paces of a footpath along which people passed daily. This spot was certainly a better situation to hide with a camera than the other ; for by pressing the sedge down a seat could be made, although there was plenty of water underneath. The next morning I took my camera there, and hoped to be more successful than on the previous day, thinking that the birds would be sure to come and feed their brood. When, however, I had waited for an hour, I began to have doubts about my success, but presently the hen approached, and worked round the nest for several minutes, having a green grub in her beak, and she at last summoned up courage enough to give this to her young, and then finding that the camera would do her no harm, she soon took no notice of it.

But it was the cock that I wanted a photograph

of more particularly, and I waited a long time, still hoping he would soon feed the young; but his



BEARDED TIT FEEDING YOUNG.

manners were more eccentric than satisfactory. Each time that the hen returned, he would run

towards her in the reeds as if he had just left the nest, and while she was feeding the brood he would sometimes come up with one of the green caterpillars (which I was unable to identify as regarded their species) to remain near, as though waiting to have room made for him. When, however, the hen went off, he seemed never to have courage enough to give anything to the young birds, but invariably ate it himself, or left it lying near, and picked it up when his mate returned to the nest.

Only once during four hours was it possible to expose a plate, and that was while he was sitting on a reed in the background while his mate was attending to her duties. The hen, which visited the nest about every five minutes, usually brought a beakful of food and distributed this equally among all the little ones, although when one had had enough it would fall asleep, and so leave more for those that were awake.

Once, among the varied fare, the hen brought a "daddy long-legs," and the young one to whose share this fell had some difficulty in disposing of the insect's limbs ; but at length, by a series of gulps, all disappeared, and the baby Tit closed its little eyes in satisfaction and also fell asleep. The hen was very assiduous in cleaning out her nest ;

about every fourth time that she came, after disposing of the supplies, she would place her head



BEARDED TIT CLEANING OUT NEST.

underneath the young to remove and carry away any droppings which had accumulated. In one of the photographs she will be seen as described,

actually occupied in the act of so cleaning out her nest.

It was quite an entertainment for a naturalist to see all this, to watch one of the most beautiful of British birds so attending and caring for her young ; but I was sorry that her mate did not also feed them, as he is even more handsome, and I very much wanted a good photograph of him.

Several other pairs were also to be seen about, with their young following in single file, and all giving forth their musical call-note while in flight.

I could not help noticing how like the Long-tailed Titmouse they seemed in their manners and flight. Although known as the Bearded Tit, they have really no relation to the family of Titmice, and are the representatives of what is quite a distinct species.

Their curious dropping flight when proceeding from one reed-bed to another, reminded one forcibly of the Long-tailed Titmouse when flying from tree to tree with their young following ; anybody only taking into consideration the habits of these two species, might think that they were closely related. To watch their climbing the reeds, hanging in all sorts of queer positions, and twisting about as they swayed in the wind, reminded one again of the Long-tailed Titmouse

when it hangs on the slender branch of a tree ; but if it was not for the two kinds having such a prominent tail, perhaps one would not be so much struck with the resemblance in their habits.

According to our observations, the hens did most of the sitting and feeding at the several nests ; but this may have been because she was bolder than her mate. Unless one is really hidden from the sight of such birds it is hardly fair to judge of their habits ; and the presence of any one with a camera in front of them, must of course have a disturbing effect on such timid creatures. At the nest occupied by those which had lost their tails, the cock performed a large part of the duties of incubation, but still fell short of the hen in what he did.

There were also several pairs about with broods, and some must have been nearly full grown, while others were only just able to follow their parents from reed to reed. Then we found nests with young in them, while others contained eggs alone, which, to judge by those in one nest, must have been quite fresh, as the number increased after discovery. It thus appears that there must be at least two broods reared during each season, if not three, by some of the Bearded Tits, especially as they sometimes commence to lay in April. I have

even heard of nests containing eggs being found at the end of July.

Owing to the draining of some other former haunts of the Bearded Tit, Norfolk is perhaps the only stronghold of this handsome bird ; and there it seems to be well protected by landowners. A gentleman who kindly gave us permission to search over his land for their nests provided we did no damage either to the birds or their nests, pulled a very long face when Mr. R. B. Lodge, one of our party, remarked that he had shot at about forty Reed Pheasants—meaning of course with his “gun camera” ; but at first the gentleman did not catch the joke, and seemed to be very much concerned for the safety of his valued birds.

CHAPTER XII

BLACK-HEADED GULL—SEEDGE-WARBLER—REED-
WARBLER — GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER — RED-
SHANK—REED-BUNTING

A VISIT to a colony of Black-headed Gulls is a sight that would interest any naturalist or sympathetic person, and to us it was exceedingly fascinating. Long before we reached the place Gulls could be seen circling round above their nests. Leaving our yacht about half a mile from the spot, we took to the punts and rowed towards the Gullery, coming at last to a large open expanse of water, in one corner of which was a point of land containing a few trees. Between these and the open water was a large piece of marshy ground thickly covered with reeds and sedge, then came a strip of deep water fringed with a border of reeds.

It was the reed-bed farthest off that the Gulls occupied ; and in passing the spot one could not see any signs of nests from the main stream. The instant that we penetrated through the outer ring of reeds the whole colony rose in a body, screaming and flying round and round aloft, and making the most unearthly noise. Some of the bolder ones swooped down quite near to our boats, and those which had broods flew to their nests, fluttered over them, and were evidently calling to the little occupants to hide themselves from intruding enemies. On getting closer, we found some young Gulls to be doing this to the best of their ability. In one nest two little dark brown fluffy Gulls, not long hatched, were trying to crawl over the edge of their nest to get to the water, and one which succeeded in doing this scrambled away, and was soon lost sight of. The other I succeeded in photographing only just before it tumbled out of the nest. The parents seemed almost frantic while I was photographing their family, and flew down quite close to the camera.

Leaving these, we rowed alongside several other nests, each of which usually contained three eggs, and so close were these built together that several could be taken on one plate. One nest contained a beautiful clutch of eggs, one of which was of a

yellow ground colour; another was a very dark brown, while the third was green. I was sorely



BLACK-HEADED GULLS.

tempted to take these specimens for my collection; but better feelings got the mastery, so that I left them and passed on.

Some of these Gulls' nests are of an enormous size, those on the margin of the reeds being three times the dimension of others found on firmer ground. One or two were built over deep water, but were so solid that one could easily



BLACK-HEADED GULL.

stand on them without sinking many inches. What an expenditure of time and labour must be made by these birds before this stability can be ensured! Those nests built on solid foundations were not much more than a few dried stalks of reed-stems, with a hollow trodden into them in

the middle. We took several snap-shots of the Gulls while they were flying, and then retired to the outer reeds, much to the satisfaction of our feathered friends, all of which, about two hundred in all, had been screaming their loudest all the time we were near them. They then gradually quieted down, while many returned to their nests, and I was able to get a photograph of several of them while sitting, with my tele-photo lens.

To judge by the number of jack in the water round about this broad, it must have been a happy hunting-ground for those most voracious of all fresh-water fish, and great numbers of the young broods must have been destroyed by them.

The conspicuous black, or rather dark brown, on the head of this Gull disappears in winter, turning to white, with the exception of a few feathers that are tipped with black. During this time they leave their inland breeding haunts and resort to the sea-coast, although numbers will visit different parts of the Thames and the London parks, probably being attracted by the amount and variety of food supplied to them by crowds of people who thus come in contact with them. These crowds are always largest between one and two o'clock p.m., the dinner-hour of the majority of middle-class Londoners, which fact the Gulls seem to be

quite aware of, for they come in greater numbers at the hour mentioned than at any other part of the day.

Numbers of boys and men take their dinner to the Victoria Embankment, actually to share it with the Gulls; and the dexterous way in which these catch any morsels thrown to them is worth noting. When they fail to catch what is thrown, which is not often, it will fall in the water, to be followed by about six or seven Gulls, which will scream while they struggle and strive to get the food. It is even quite comical to see how they will reject mere bread if anything they like better is to be had. If they catch a piece which is tossed to them, they will drop it from their beak on discovering its quality; but when pressed by hunger I have seen them eat even bread with evident relish. Some of the bolder Gulls will take food from a person's hand.

During the memorable and now historical great frost of the early part of the year 1895, thousands of sea-birds resorted to the Thames, as seen from the City or Southwark shore, among them being very many different species, several quite uncommon birds also being seen. There were great numbers of Black-headed Gulls among the visitors, and feeding among these, opposite

Blackfriars, and nimbly running about floating masses of ice, I saw a Pied Wagtail, which for some time fed with the Gulls, picking up whatever could be found. Then, leaving its companions, this Wagtail flew on to the mud at low tide and disappeared under Blackfriars Bridge. It is not



BLACK-HEADED GULLS SITTING.

often that one sees such a bird in the very heart of London.

Occasionally one may see some curious things in the streets of a great town. Thus, a butterfly flying gaily about Cheapside might seem to be strangely out of place ; but I once saw the Large White there ; and on another occasion I met with the Small White in Paternoster Row. In St.

Paul's Churchyard I have also seen at times some splendid specimens of White Sparrows.

The Black-headed Gull can be seen on most parts of our sea-coast during winter. At low tide they will be found to have certain "beats" which they rigidly keep to, which I have carefully noted at different times when watching them and their ways. These "beats" are usually about three hundred yards in length ; and the Gulls follow in single file, very orderly, going over the chosen space, flying up slowly against the wind, occasionally hovering over a small wave until it breaks, in order to see what it may have brought with it, then quickly pouncing on anything eatable which comes to view. Each time they reach the end of their "beat" they turn round and fly quickly with the wind back to their original starting-place, and turning round will go over the whole ground again. It is worth while to take notice of the accuracy with which they keep to these "beats," never going beyond a certain point, although to an observer the coast for a mile or more may appear to be very similar in its characteristics.

I recently watched four Black-headed Gulls searching for food in this way ; with a quick movement of its wings, the foremost pounced on something that a receding wave had left, and picking

up what looked like a small fish, flew away followed by the others all screaming loudly. For some



YOUNG BLACK-HEADED GULL IN NEST.

time they circled round overhead, following their comrade with the fish ; then two flew back to their

"beat," leaving the others overhead to fight for the possession of the prize. Several attempts were made by the aggressive bird to snatch the fish from the other's beak ; but by a strong effort the fish was at length swallowed and the two returned to look for more, apparently as amicable as they were before the contest began. Soon afterwards three Gulls flew out to sea, leaving only one to go over the course, this probably being the one which had the coveted fish : for each time it came to the spot where the great "find" had occurred, it hovered over the water watching intently and hoping for a second success. The manner in which the Gull moved its wings and dropped on to anything eatable reminded one of the Kestrel.

One of the features of night in the land of the Broads is the chorus of Warblers, which may be heard. There are three kinds to be met with—the Sedge, the Reed, and the Grasshopper-Warblers. Most conspicuous among these is the loud song of the first-named, and any one who listens to the notes would think that a number of garrulous birds were holding a council, the imitative little bird being capable of reproducing the notes of many other species. While listening to its song on a certain evening, I recognised the call-note of the Swallow, the *pink, pink*, of the Chaffinch, the



SEDGE-WARBLER.

rattling cry of the Blackbird—the latter being quite realistically rendered—while the Whitethroat and Sparrow's notes also added variety to the performance. Then between all of these various cries and call-notes, the Sedge-Warbler's own song, *chizzick, chizzick, chiddy, chiddy, chiddy, chow, chow, chow*, and other pretty variations, which cannot easily be expressed in writing, could be heard. There seems to be no end to the imitative powers of this songster, and some birds seem to be superior in their singing to others, which is quite natural. There used to be one at Winchmore Hill that showed most striking powers of imitation, affording rare entertainment to those who heard its varied notes.

The Sedge-Warbler is more often heard than seen, as it prefers to sing from the innermost recesses of a bush. Still, some of the birds when sitting are very confiding, others are correspondingly shy. At one nest I waited with my camera for a long time for the bird to return; but had to go away, to find out afterwards that the nest was deserted owing, no doubt, to the spectre of the camera having frightened the occupant away. At another nest the sitting bird was confiding enough to allow one almost to touch her before she would rise, so that I obtained a series of photographs of

her while sitting. While I placed the camera in position she left the nest, but only went about a yard away; and although one could not see through the thick sedge, the bird's movements could be followed in the grass as she crawled towards the nest, which was entered very quietly. Each time she returned practically the same position was taken. I tried several little tricks to try and get her to sit in different positions, but the only one which partially succeeded was in trying to move her



SEdge-WARBLER SITTING.

beak round with the aid of a grass-stem, a liberty which was resented by the bird leaving the nest for a few minutes, and when she came back her beak was pointed in a different direction. This was the only alteration of position I was able to effect.

The bird in the photograph, entering its nest, was nothing like so tame as the one just mentioned, and her likeness was obtained by standing the camera in a small pond, and retiring to a distance



SEDGE-WARBLER ENTERING NEST.

with the pneumatic tube and watching with a field-glass. Nearly an hour passed before a return visit was made.

Although the Sedge-Warbler is to be met with

for the most part about the banks of streams, and in marshy places, it does not confine itself exclusively to the vicinity of water, but is sometimes to be found nesting at some distance from it. I have heard it singing in a hedge at night during the nesting season some distance from water, and no doubt the nest was concealed among the thick herbage round about. While engaged in singing, this little Warbler erects the feathers on its head and throat, then raises its beak, and, to judge by its manner, seems to be putting all its heart into the music of the notes.

Very much like the song of the Sedge-Warbler, but without so much mimicry, is that of the Reed-Warbler. This bird, like the former, prefers to sing hidden among the reeds, usually in proximity to its nest, which wonderful little structure is a marvel of ingenuity, being suspended on three or four reeds. When first commenced, it is said to be very near to the water, but in proportion as the reeds grow it is raised, and by the time that the eggs are hatched the nest is somewhat higher than at first ; but we found nests only just finished fully a yard above the water.

Although so neat in appearance among the reeds, only very little handling will destroy its shape ; and owing to the thickness of the growth



NEST OF REED-WARBLER (*exterior*).

among which it is built, the nest is a very difficult object to photograph. While I was focussing one, the cock Reed-Warbler sat about a yard away singing loudly, every now and then pausing and cautiously creeping from reed to reed whence he could just be seen peeping through. The thick reeds and sedge among which the nest was placed were growing in a deep pool ; but the roots, about two feet under the water, made a platform for camera and operator, although a false step might occasionally nearly ensure both going into the black slime beneath. By the time I had finished photographing this nest and packed up my camera darkness came on ; and proceeding from the direction of several clumps of bushes, in different parts of the marsh came the curious "reeling" notes of the Grasshopper-Warbler. When, however, one got near the bush whence the "reeling" seemed to come, the sound was discovered to proceed from quite a different place, almost leading one to think that these birds must have some kind of ventriloquial powers. Almost at midnight I have heard one "reeling" in a similar way.

In whatsoever direction we went in Norfolk, there we seemed to come upon the Redshank ; one or two places appeared to swarm with them, and as we passed they would rise and fly about

above the meadows or marsh land, and keep up their continual musical whistle, which might be



NEST OF REED-WARBLER (*interior*).

rendered *thou-li, thou-li*, given at intervals of a few seconds. Although there were such large numbers

about we failed to find any nests, owing perhaps to it being rather late in the season.

On an island about two acres in extent we felt sure that there must be some, as several pairs of birds rose when we landed. A friend and myself were determined to find one if such a feat was possible, and we tramped over the whole island, but met with no success. On our return to the punt we watched the birds overhead, and could locate the position where two pairs settled; but on going towards them, and reaching them just as they rose, no nest was there. Still feeling sure, by the evident anxiety of the birds when we landed, that there were either eggs or young ones about, we made another search without success and returned to the punt again disappointed. We then watched two very noisy birds, and, noting the place where they settled, we ran towards them, and were this time rewarded by finding a nearly full-grown young Redshank hiding in a tuft of grass from which its parents rose. This we photographed, and no sooner was this done than the youngster took to its legs, soon being lost sight of among the overgrowth.

While stalking a bird with the camera, or watching one through a field-glass, a "yelper," as the Redshank is sometimes called—a very appropriate

name—will sometimes catch sight of you, and will rouse every living thing within one hundred yards by its persistent “yelping.” Still, on the marshes, and along the coast during the winter, it is the means of saving the life of many a bird when shooting is in progress; for, being ever on the



YOUNG REDSHANK.

alert, it gives its alarm-note at the instant danger is seen, much to the annoyance of sportsmen who may be trying to stalk other birds. Probably through having been the cause of ruining much good sport, the marshmen speak of these Redshanks as “them cussed yelpers.”

On our way to the Black-headed Gulls' colony a Redshank was seen perched on top of a pole on the banks of the river, and on our return some time later it was still there, and remained there for a while longer ; but on our trying to take a photograph it had gone. Others were flying about a meadow near by ; but for some reason this one seemed to prefer the post, although this stood within a few yards of passing boats.

One of the most interesting birds we saw during our short stay among the Broads was the Reed-Bunting, or Reed-Sparrow as it is more frequently called. In all places these were to be seen sitting and swinging among the tall reeds. Any intruder going near a nest caused them to fly on a little farther, to attract intruders from the locality. We found numbers of their nests ; and having heard much about their being very close sitters, I expected to have an easy task in photographing one ; but after many attempts I had to give up this idea.

Near one nest I left a small stool covered over with reeds for two or three hours to resemble as near as possible the way I afterwards hid the camera, so that the bird should get used to seeing it. While the stool was there one of the birds returned ; but on placing the camera in exactly the

same position as the stool, and retiring to a distance of twenty yards, both the cock and hen



REED-BUNTING.

sat on the waving reeds and watched me for a couple of hours, and did not seem at all inclined to return.

As regards getting a photograph of a Reed-Bunting while sitting, I was thus disappointed; but I obtained several views of the cock and hen



REED-BUNTING (*male*).

sitting on reeds in proximity to a nest containing a brood of five. I thought that perhaps by focussing this nest, which was on the ground, I might get a

snap-shot of either one of the parents while feeding their young. When the camera had been in position some time, and both birds had flown several times into the grass about a yard from the nest without going to it, I found that the young had quietly left, and had crawled towards the place where they were being fed. I then focussed a certain reed that the old birds would fly on to ; and while so doing, the hen Bunting flew towards me and, calling loudly, lay on the ground near my feet ; then she rolled on her side stretching out the wing that was uppermost as if it were broken ; then crawled along in this position so as to do her best to attract me away from the spot. On finding that I did not follow, she became almost frantic, for, returning to the same spot, she went through the performance once again, this time flapping about on the ground, pretending to be badly wounded, at the same time squeaking as if in pain. Seeing that I was not inclined to move, however, she sat on a reed close by, and I was able to take her photograph.

Meanwhile the young had taken advantage of the occasion to scuttle off in various directions. I did not see them again at that time ; but on the next morning I found that they had returned to their nest where their parents were feeding them,

and by focussing a tall grass-stem near, on which they kept perching, I was able to get several good photographs. Their method of reaching the young

was peculiar; for, returning with a beakful of food, they settled on a reed, and while this swung to and fro with the weight, they slowly twisted round in a sort of spiral manner, and with each turn got several inches nearer the ground; and as the reed bent, the tail would be



REED-BUNTING SLIDING DOWN REED.

spread out and raised or lowered while the bird balanced itself. This was a very pretty piece of wild-bird exercise.

For about every six times that the hen fed her

family, her mate brought food only once, and then seemed very little concerned for the safety of his dependants; for while the hen was doing her best to attract me away, her mate sat on a reed about twenty yards off singing as though he wished to give a harmless visitor some entertainment.

CHAPTER XIII

GREAT BUSTARD—BITTERN—RUFF—MONTAGU'S
HARRIER—HEN-HARRIER—SHORT-EARED OWL.

NORFOLK is one of the best counties in England from the field naturalist's point of view ; and considering that about three hundred different species of birds have been observed there during the present century, no lack of bird-life is wanting. Of late years, however, owing to the reclamation of marsh lands, numbers of the rarer species have ceased to breed, while others are even extinct.

The Great Bustard, of which we read of "droves" once being seen on the large heaths, is now only a very rare visitor, one or two only being seen at intervals of several years. The Bitterns which used to haunt the large reed-beds, and rear their young in them, now no longer breed there, and their loud "boom" is therefore but seldom heard.

Country folk used to have an erroneous notion that the Bittern, when "booming," thrust its beak into a reed, which served as a kind of trumpet to swell the sound. Others would say that it put its head under water and blew with all its might, and so produced its "boom," the sound being so strange that it has given rise to many superstitious notions among the ignorant and credulous. In the days of falconry the Bittern was strictly preserved, as it afforded very good sport, but which too often resulted in the death or wounding of the falcon employed.

The interesting Ruffs are not now to be seen in spring "sparring" with their beaks for the possession of the Reeves—the name given to the hen of this species. Very many more birds might be mentioned which have almost disappeared.

As an illustration of life in the Eastern Counties in the early part of the present century, I borrow the following interesting passage from "Observations on the Fauna of Norfolk," by the late Rev. Richard Lubbock :—

"When I first visited the Broads, I found here and there an occupant, squatted down, as the Americans would call it, on the verge of a pool, who relied almost entirely on shooting and fishing

for the support of himself and family, and lived in a truly primitive manner. I particularly remember one hero of this description. 'Our Broad,' as he always called the extensive pool by which his cottage stood, was his microcosm—his world; the islands in it were his gardens of the Hesperides; its opposite extremity his *ultima Thule*. Wherever his thoughts wandered, they could not get beyond the circle of his beloved lake; indeed, I never knew them aberrant but once, when he informed me, with a doubting air, that he had sent his wife and his two eldest children to a fair at a country village two miles off, that their ideas might expand by travel. As he sagely observed, they had never been away from 'our Broad.' I went into his house at the dinner-hour, and found the whole party going to fall to most thankfully upon a roasted herring-gull, killed, of course, on 'our Broad.' His life presented no vicissitudes but an alternation of marsh employment. In winter, after his day's reed-cutting, he might be regularly found posted at nightfall, waiting for the flight of fowl, or paddling after them on the open water. With the first warm days of February he launched his fleet of trimmers, pike finding a ready sale at his own door to those who bought them to sell again in the Norwich market. As soon as the pike had spawned and

were out of season the eels began to occupy his attention and lapwings' eggs to be diligently sought for. In the end of April the island in his watery domain was frequently visited for the sake of shooting the ruffs which resorted thither, on their first arrival. As the days grew longer and hotter he might be found searching in some smaller pools near his house for the shoals of tench, as they commenced spawning. Yet a little longer and he began marsh-mowing—his gun always laid ready upon his coat, in case flappers should be met with. By the middle of August teal came to a wet corner near his cottage, snipes began to arrive, and he was often called upon to exercise his vocal powers on the curlews that passed to and fro. By the end of September good snipe-shooting was generally to be met with in his neighbourhood; and his accurate knowledge of the marshes, his unassuming good-humour, and zeal in providing sport for those who employed him, made him very much sought after as a sporting guide by snipe shots and fishermen; and his knowledge of the habits of different birds enabled him to give useful information to those who collected them."

In more modern times the agent of the professional egg-collector has very much to answer for.

in regard to the disappearance of many rare birds ;
but notwithstanding the ravages by these people,



MONTAGU'S HARRIER.

a few of the less common species still attempt
to breed during each year. Of these Montagu's

Harrier is one to be mentioned. Although it is never a continuous resident in this country, a pair or two occasionally come over to our shores to breed in East Anglia, but the eggs are seldom allowed to remain until they are hatched ; and it is also most probable that the birds themselves never return to their winter quarters.

One was seen by us on one occasion carrying a rat in its talons, so that it may have been successful in rearing its young, or it may have been carrying food to its sitting mate. Four days' later, while sitting in a boat, I saw one of this species flying towards me while chasing two small birds ; but these quickly outdistanced their pursuer, and the Harrier turned and passed quite close to me, and then flew slowly over a large reed-bed, keeping just above the surface, no doubt hoping to find nests, as they feed for a good part on the eggs of smaller birds. It passed immediately over a Reed-Bunting's nest which I knew of, and with a field-glass I could see the two Buntings rise from their quarters and fly some distance, then settling on the reeds ; and happily their nest was passed by the destroyer without being molested.

As an instance of the way this Harrier feeds its sitting mate, the following, which I take from Mr. J. H. Gurney's "Ornithological Notes from

Norfolk," which appeared in the *Zoologist*, of March, 1898, will be found of interest :—

"Mr. Lee had also the chance of watching a pair of Montagu's Harriers which were breeding, and of seeing the grey male hover some seventy feet above the marsh where the female was sitting, and then drop prey—probably a mouse—which its mate, quickly rising, caught in the air."

The flight of the Harrier is particularly graceful, its buoyancy on the wing reminding one somewhat of the Barn Owl when hawking over meadows of an evening.

The nest in the illustration was in a large field of reeds, some of these standing seven or eight feet high and growing very thickly together. The nest was placed in a small opening among these, and was composed of dried reed-stems gathered by the birds from the immediate vicinity, and just trampled into shape. I believe that, as a rule, the birds add more material as incubation proceeds. The eggs in the nest shown were almost white, but had a slight bluish tinge, and there were some small reddish-brown spots upon them.

This species, which was first discovered by George Montagu, a naturalist who lived in the

latter part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, was called by him the Ash-coloured Harrier, but it is now nearly always called after Montagu himself.

For a long time the male and female of the Hen-Harrier were considered to be different species owing to their difference in plumage. The hen was formerly called the Ring-tail, and it was not until Montagu's observations were published, in the year 1802, that it was admitted to be the hen.

The habits of these two species of Harriers are very similar, though in their distribution the one is found where the other is wanting. The Hen-Harrier, liking higher and less marshy ground, used to be fairly numerous in Scotland and other hilly regions, while Montagu's Harrier was more often met with in the flat parts of the Eastern Counties than its congener, and is practically unknown in the north, except as a very rare visitor to the extreme south of Scotland.

Owing to the destruction of all Falcons and Hawks by game-preservers, these birds will very soon be things of the past unless a little more protection is accorded them. It must be admitted, that they destroy the eggs of ground-nesting birds during the season, but their principal food is

snakes, lizards, and other reptiles; and they may be seen quartering the ground with great regularity and perseverance in search of supplies.

For the photographs of the nests of the Montagu Harrier and the following species, I am indebted to the Rev. M. C. H. Bird, who, during our short stay in Norfolk, rendered the useful service of showing us the locality of the two nests.

The Short-eared Owl, unlike most members of the same family, prefers large open moors and fens of the open country, so that the farther north we go the more numerous does the species become.

In Scotland during 1890-1891 there was a plague of field-voles, and also a great increase of Short-eared Owls. Where only one or two pairs had nested in ordinary seasons, they were then to be counted in dozens; four hundred pairs were said to have taken up their abode. The number of eggs they laid also very largely increased. At other times, when field-voles and other small rodents have increased greatly, this Owl has made its appearance in large numbers.

During the autumn their numbers are added to by others coming from the Continent. Sportsmen often flush them when shooting over the ground which they frequent, and they are called by their

the Woodcock Owl, owing no doubt to a characteristic curious flight which might at first sight be considered to have a slight resemblance to that of the Woodcock.

A few pairs nest annually in Norfolk and the adjacent counties, though these are very often molested by the egg-collector. I was glad to hear of one family that had been successfully reared during the spring of this year (1899), and the accompanying photograph is of one of the nearly full-grown birds. The nest pictured was placed in a clump of candle-rush growing in a field of reeds. These had already been cut down, however, the clump of rushes in which the nest was placed was left by the mowers who discovered it. In the thickest part of the clump the nest was found. The whole was admirably covered with a natural dome formed by the growing rushes, the whole of the interior being trodden down and so formed materials for the nest. There was only one small entrance at the side.

Before we photographed this, the Owls had deserted their chosen quarters, and a keeper remarked that some of the eggs were quite fresh and others almost ready for hatching. The reason was that this Owl lays two eggs and sits on them for a few days and then adds two more, and so on ;

but by the time the first two are hatched, there are often fresh eggs also in the nest. One bird continues to feed the young while the other sits



YOUNG SHORT-EARED OWL.

continually until all of the eggs are hatched. I have heard of other species of Owls laying their eggs in the same singular manner.

The Short-eared Owl, unlike many of the same family, searches for food during the hours of daylight; and it has been known to carry off a wounded bird while shooting was in progress, and before the very eyes of the sportsmen.

This Owl makes a capital household pet, and can be easily tamed, although its habit of hissing, snapping its beak sharply, and beating the ground with its feet when a stranger approaches, is somewhat alarming to those persons who do not know what the habits of the creature are. I had a specimen some years ago, and kept it for a few weeks, or until it met with an unfortunate accident. The food it most enjoyed was a rat and small birds; a rat was a meal to be attacked with great violence, the bird holding it down with its powerful feet, the long claws being well driven into the animal's back. The eyes would first be torn out, then the head was swallowed, and lastly portions of the body; and when about half was eaten, the Owl would sit for some time with one foot on the rat, and look round, eating the rest when prompted by appetite.

One day while it was so engaged, some Rooks flew over the aviary in which it was confined. The effect was remarkable; the whole appearance of the Owl altered; its ear-tufts were erected,



SHORT-EARED OWL.

while all the feathers on its body were puffed out, making it appear to be nearly twice its natural size. It snapped its beak, then viciously and loudly hissed, and continued to show anger until the Rooks were quite out of sight.

To any one who, like myself, loves Nature's solitudes, the Broads are an ideal place to spend a holiday. One seems to have the pleasures of sailing without the murmur of breaking waves, such as are nearly always to be heard on the sea, although even that may be music of another kind. Then, however charming the London suburbs may be as regards their scenery and air, they seem to lack quiet; there is always to be heard some symptoms of the roar of the Great City not far away—the whistle and rumbling of railways, and extra traffic in the lanes and highways.

Among the Broads there is perfect stillness, especially during the long twilight of a late spring or early summer evening. At such times, just before sunset, I liked to row out alone to the centre of a small Broad, and while resting on the oars, to let the boat drift whither it would. All around would be signs of coming summer; all things which met the eye contained some promise of returning life and fruitfulness. In the west the sun would go down beyond the wide expanse,

leaving everything that showed above the fields of reeds cut out in sharp profile against the sky; thin clouds gathered overhead, and as twilight deepened into night, these became of a crimson tint which was reflected in the water beneath, seeming even to give the green and brown reeds a shade of crimson.

Above, a Snipe was "bleating"—starting softly as the downward flight was commenced; the curious sound caused by the flight and tail feathers increased as the bird, in its swift rush earthwards, came nearer. Over a meadow, not far off, another commenced a similar exercise, and the first one flew to a marshy field beyond a windmill on the other side of the Broad. Two Reed-Pheasants were flying restlessly about on my left, calling their young together to roost; and these presently flew to their parents, and were all lost sight of among the thick clumps of reeds. Their musical call-notes having ceased, hardly a sound was to be heard, except the little Moor-hens calling to their mother, one of which ventured out into the open, when a jack jumped at it, and pulled the young thing under water, breaking the stillness by an ominous splash. The ripples expanded on the surface, and when these reached the reeds all was again quiet. In the shades on the

other side of this small Broad there was another movement now apparent ; a Great Crested Grebe swam slowly out towards me, but through my keeping absolutely still it took no notice of the boat. The Grebe dived, thus giving me an opportunity to get closer. Noiselessly I pushed the boat stern foremost a yard or two nearer, and while the boat was drifting the bird was on the alert, and to my surprise swam towards me, and then dived again. By my watch I found that it remained under water for thirty seconds and then rose with a small wriggling eel in its beak. From the reeds, whence it first came, a harsh croak was heard and a young Grebe swam towards its mother and obtained the food she had just brought up. The old bird dived again, followed by the little Grebe, this time remaining under water for sixteen seconds.

While the two were out of sight I managed to get nearer to them, so that they rose only twenty yards away. Then, suddenly, we were startled by hearing a loud cry overhead—*fraank, fraank*. Two Herons flying low over the water, with their ever-watchful eyes had seen me in the boat, so that they gave out their warning to every living thing around. The Grebe and the little one immediately dived, and were not seen again. It

was at this time growing dusk, and the Sedge-Warblers were striking up their chattering songs all around ; the Reed-Warblers could also be distinguished by their slightly softer notes ; two Grasshopper-Warblers were "reeling" from the sallow bushes in the meadow ; while from this same field, sounding much harsher, but still somewhat similar came the "churring" of the Nightjar.

All around on the still water, there now rose a thick white mist, which looked like steam among the reeds and meadows. Standing up in the boat, the view was as if one was in a vast white sea, with here and there a tall patch of reeds, a bush, or hedgerow showing like small islands or strips of land. Each dip of the oar, while proceeding towards our yacht, seemed to stir up more mist from the water. Overhead there was a *swish*, *swish*, of wings, as the Wild Ducks flew past to their feeding haunts ; but nothing was seen except here and there a star shining out between the thin clouds, which were now of a dark grey colour. It was delightful to be thus alone with Nature in a place like this Broad, where the quietness of solitude was broken only by the harsh chatter of night Warblers. At such a time one more fully realises the wonderful and manifold works of the

God of Nature, as are shown on every hand ; and especially at a season when spring and summer seem to meet, the one sweetly fading into the other.

With such sights and sounds as are to be seen and heard during an evening among the Broads, the student of Nature has always some new thing to afford entertainment and invite research. The more we study Nature in her wild beauty the more fascinating does she become—the flowers, insects, birds, all seem to afford food for reflection, to give pleasure ; and as we contemplate them we can always learn something which we did not know before.

“Listen to Nature,
A thousand joys her happy followers prove,
Health, plenty, rest, society, and love.”

LORD HERVEY.

In contrast to the quiet evening among the Broads, is the early summer morning. Everything is covered with copious dew which sparkles in the sunbeams ; everywhere the birds are singing ; graceful Swans are here and there on the Broad, some with young, others in small groups gathered in the more shallow spots ; now one and then another will dip its long neck under the water to

probe amongst the mud for food ; others are eating young grass-shoots on the margin of a meadow. Over the deeper water the breeze converts the surface into ripples that sparkle like silver. From the little copse across the narrow strip of marsh land, the wild strains of Nature's songsters reach the ear. There the Blackcap is pouring forth his wild song, and the chiming Willow-Wrens can also be heard. Flowers begin to open on the banks of the Broad ; and although the sun has not long been above the horizon, a swallow-tail butterfly flies past, and settles on a piece of ragged-robin to bathe its wings in the sunshine. Coots with their young are venturing out from the cover of the reeds ; and above all these is the Lark, which, rejoicing in the return of summer, sings its song of praise.

Everything appears to be happy ; the whole earth is welcoming the new-born day, and all we look upon has the charm of summer associated with it. We see Nature in her most attractive aspect clothed in different shades of green. Each blade of grass or sedge, with the dew still hanging upon it, seems to be set with jewels. The merry sedge-birds are still chatting as they were during the night ; and it may even puzzle one to know when they actually sleep. From the fir-trees in

the corner of the copse, comes the gentle *coo, coo*, of the Wood-Pigeon, and ever and anon the Cuckoo's cry is heard from across the water, while over the marsh land the Redshanks are "yelping," and the Peewits calling. In this way the long procession of returning summer passes, all grows brighter as the day wears on and the sun rises higher in the heavens. Then once again quiet eventide descends, and Nature's beauties as seen by day give place once more to the no less striking outlook of a summer night on the Norfolk Broads.

The Birdland Camera

A NEW FORM FOCAL PLANE REFLEX.

Designed by Mr. Oliver G. Pike.

The lightest and most efficient Camera for NATURALIST PHOTOGRAPHERS yet made.

Noiseless
shutter
discharge.

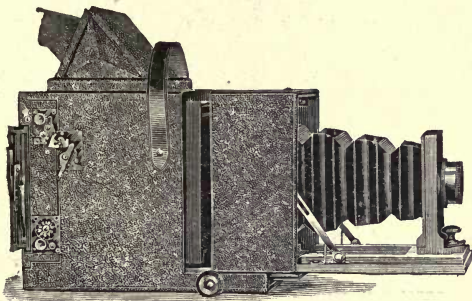
Very long
extension.

Full size finder.

Picture in sight
right up to the
instant of ex-
posure.

Inconspicuous
in appearance.

Equally suitable
for general in-
stantaneous and
Press work.



Descriptive Pamphlet post-free to readers of "In Birdland."

Every Requisite for Bird Photography.

Introducers of

THE NATURALIST'S

FIELD GLASS.

A high power Binocular of the finest quality, 12 lenses. The most comfortable glass made for Watching Birds, &c.

In Leather Sling Case, **£4 4s.**

SOLE MAKERS:

SANDERS & CROWHURST

Opticians and Photographic Dealers,

71, SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, LONDON, W.

Telephone No. 4133, Gerrard. Telegraphic Address: "OPTOGRAM, LONDON."

MR. FISHER UNWIN has in
Preparation a New Book by

Mrs. Brightwen

(Author of "Wild Nature Won by Kindness")

entitled—

Last Hours

With Nature

**Popular Studies of
Animal and Plant Life**

Price 2/6 net

London: T. FISHER UNWIN

THE STORY OF THE NATIONS

A SERIES OF POPULAR HISTORIES.

Each Volume is furnished with Maps, Illustrations, and Index. Large Crown 8vo, fancy cloth, gold lettered, or Library Edition, dark cloth, burnished red top, 5s. each.—Or may be had in half Persian, cloth sides, gilt tops; Price on application.

1. Rome. By ARTHUR GILMAN, M.A.
2. The Jews. By Prof. J. K. HOSMER.
3. Germany. By Rev. S. BARING-GOULD, M.A.
4. Carthage. By Prof. ALFRED J. CHURCH.
5. Alexander's Empire. By Prof. J. P. MAHAFFY.
6. The Moors in Spain. By STANLEY LANE-POOLE.
7. Ancient Egypt. By Prof. GEORGE RAWLINSON.
8. Hungary. By Prof. ARMINIUS VAMBERY.
9. The Saracens. By ARTHUR GILMAN, M.A.
10. Ireland. By the Hon. EMILY LAWLESS.
11. Chaldea. By ZÉNAÏDE A. RAGOZIN.
12. The Goths. By HENRY BRADLEY.
13. Assyria. By ZÉNAÏDE A. RAGOZIN.
14. Turkey. By STANLEY LANE-POOLE.
15. Holland. By Prof. J. E. THOROLD ROGERS.
16. Mediæval France. By GUSTAVE MASSON.
17. Persia. By S. G. W. BENJAMIN.
18. Phœnicia. By Prof. G. RAWLINSON.
19. Media. By ZÉNAÏDE A. RAGOZIN.
20. The Hausa Towns. By HELEN ZIMMERN.
21. Early Britain. By Prof. ALFRED J. CHURCH.
22. The Barbary Corsairs. By STANLEY LANE-POOLE.
23. Russia. By W. R. MORFILL, M.A.
24. The Jews under the Romans. By W. D. MORRISON.
25. Scotland. By JOHN MACKINTOSH, LL.D.
26. Switzerland. By Mrs LINA HUG and R. STEAD.
27. Mexico. By SUSAN HALE.
28. Portugal. By H. MORSE STEPHENS.
29. The Normans. By SARAH ORNE JEWETT.
30. The Byzantine Empire. By C. W. C. OMAN.
31. Sicily: Phœnician, Greek and Roman. By the late Prof. E. A. FREEMAN.
32. The Tuscan Republics. By BELLA DUFFY.
33. Poland. By W. R. MORFILL, M.A.
34. Parthia. By Prof. GEORGE RAWLINSON.
35. The Australian Commonwealth. By GREVILLE TREGARTHEN.
36. Spain. By H. E. WATTS.
37. Japan. By DAVID MURRAY, Ph.D.
38. South Africa. By GEORGE M. THEAL.
39. Venice. By ALETHEA WIEL.
40. The Crusades. By T. A. ARCHER and C. L. KINGSFORD.
41. Vedic India. By Z. A. RAGOZIN.
42. The West Indies and the Spanish Main. By JAMES RODWAY.
43. Bohemia. By C. EDMUND MAURICE.
44. The Balkans. By W. MILLER, M.A.
45. Canada. By Sir J. G. BOURINOT, LL.D.
46. British India. By R. W. FRAZER, LL.B.
47. Modern France. By ANDRÉ LE BON.
48. The Franks. By LEWIS SERGEANT.
49. Austria. By SIDNEY WHITMAN.
50. Modern England. Before the Reform Bill. By JUSTIN MCCARTHY.
51. China. By Prof. R. K. DOUGLAS.
52. Modern England. From the Reform Bill to the Present Time. By JUSTIN MCCARTHY.
53. Modern Spain. By MARTIN A. S. HUME.
54. Modern Italy. By PIETRO ORSI.
55. Norway. By H. H. BOYSEN.
56. Wales. By O. M. EDWARDS.
57. Mediæval Rome. By W. MILLER, M.A.
58. The Papal Monarchy. By WILLIAM BARRY, D.D.
59. Mediæval India under Mohammedan Rule. By STANLEY LANE-POOLE.
60. Buddhist India. By Prof. T. W. RHYS-DAVIDS.
61. Parliamentary England. By EDWARD JENKS, M.A.
62. Mediæval England. By MARY BATESON.
63. The Coming of Parliament. By L. CECIL JANE.
64. The Story of Greece. From the Earliest Times to A.D. 14. By E. S. SHUCKBURGH.
In Preparation.

The Story of Greece. From the Roman Occupation to A.D. 1453. By E. S. SHUCKBURGH.

The Story of the Roman Empire (B.C. 29 to A.D. 476). By H. STUART JONES.

F. FISHER UNWIN, Publisher, 1, Adelphi Terrace, London, W.C.

A NEW POPULAR EDITION.

The Works of Mark Rutherford.

Each Volume Crown 8vo, Cloth, 1s. net.

LIST OF VOLUMES.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARK
RUTHERFORD.
MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE.
THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE.
MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING.
CATHARINE FURZE.

"It is impossible to name after Mark Rutherford a novelist who has stirred a pity so deep and wide with less appearance of making a business of tears."—*Athenæum*.

"Something unique in modern English literature."—C. F. G. Masterman in the *Daily News*.

"The works of Mark Rutherford have done more for me by a great deal than the works of any other living author."—Dr Robertson Nicoll in the *British Weekly*.

"Will always live in the history of the English Novel."—Edward Garnett in the *Speaker*.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, 6s.

PAGES FROM A JOURNAL.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, 3s. 6d.

CLARA HOPGOOD.

T. FISHER UNWIN, PUBLISHER,
1, ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON, W.C.

Six Standard Works.

COMPLETE POPULAR EDITIONS. ILLUSTRATED.

Large Crown 8vo, Cloth. Price 2/6 net.

The Life of Richard Cobden.

By JOHN MORLEY.

"One of the most important and interesting works of its class in the English language."—*Daily Chronicle*.

The Life and Times of Savonarola.

By Professor PASQUALE VILLARI.

"The most interesting religious biography that we know of in modern times. It is difficult to speak of its merits without seeming exaggeration."—*Spectator*.

The Life and Times of Machiavelli.

By Professor PASQUALE VILLARI.

"Machiavelli is represented for all time in the pages of Villari."—*Guardian*.

The Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat.

By JOHN SMITH MOFFAT.

"A loving record of a noble life, which has left the world a lesson for all time of the power of earnest labour and simple faith."—*Daily Chronicle*.

The History of Florence.

By Professor PASQUALE VILLARI.

"This volume is indeed worthy of the reputation of its author. . . . We feel very grateful to him for having given us the most concise, and at the same time perhaps the most complete constitutional history that has yet appeared of the first two centuries of the Florentine Republic."—*Speaker*.

English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages (XIVth Century).

By J. J. JUSSELAND, French Ambassador at Washington

"One of those enchanting volumes which only Frenchmen have the gift of writing. Buy it if you are wise, and keep it as a joy for ever."—Dr Augustus Jessopp in the *Nineteenth Century*.

T. FISHER UNWIN, PUBLISHER,
1, ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON, W.C.

Standard Works.

COMPLETE POPULAR EDITIONS. ILLUSTRATED.

Large Crown 8vo, Cloth. Price 2/6 net.

Lord Beaconsfield: A Biography.

By T. P. O'CONNOR.

"Clever and brilliant. . . . Worth reading by everybody who either admires or hates his subject."—*Guardian*

"A slashing and vastly interesting book."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

Rome and Pompeii. Archæological Rambles.

By GASTON BOISSIER.

"M. Gaston Boissier is one of the few living archæologists who can make the dead bones of the past live again. While his researches show the accuracy and thoroughness which we associate with German scholarship, he has a gift of exposition which is wholly French. We can imagine therefore, no better handbook for traveller or archæologist than this one. —*Daily Mail*.

Holyoake: Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life.

By GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

"A valuable contribution to the political, social, intellectual, and even revolutionary history of our time."—*Times*.

"The book is full of interest; it produces a vivid, personal impression, it contains contemporary notes on men and women of the century, it has shrewd and vigorous sentences, and illustrates our own progress in civilising thought."—*Spectator*.

Sir Walter Raleigh.

By Major MARTIN A. S. HUME.

"An admirable book which ought to be read by every one who takes any interest in things that ought to interest all—the building of the Empire and the men who built it. There is not a dull page in it, and with his skilful telling of it, the story of Raleigh's life and of his times reads like a romance."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

T. FISHER UNWIN, PUBLISHER,
1 ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON, W.C.

The "How To" Series of Practical Handbooks.

Foolscap 8vo, cloth, 1s. each.

Stops, or How to Punctuate ; A Practical Handbook for Writers and Students.

By PAUL ALLARDYCE.

"Admirably adapted to remove all confusion."—*Publishers' Circular.*

How to Become a Private Secretary.

By ARTHUR SHEPHERD, Private Secretary to the Archbishop
of Canterbury.

"A most useful and entertaining volume."—*St James's Gazette.*

How to Become a Commercial Traveller.

By ED. B. GRIEVE.

"Full of sound business advice."—*Yorkshire Post.*

How to Arrange with your Creditors.

By R. SHUDDICK.

"A useful and instructive manual."—*Scotsman.*

How to Become a Teacher.

By T. W. BERRY, Director of Education, Withington, Lancs.

"It gives the most authentic information in a most readable and handy form."—*National Teacher.*

T. FISHER UNWIN, PUBLISHER,
1, ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON, W.C.

The Mermaid Series.

THE BEST PLAYS OF THE OLD DRAMATISTS.

Literal Reproductions of the Old Text.

Printed on thin Paper. Small Crown 8vo, each Volume containing about 500 Pages and an Etched Frontispiece.

Cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

Leather, 3s. 6d. net.

- The Best Plays of Christopher Marlowe. Edited, with Critical Memoir and Notes, by HAVELOCK ELLIS; and containing a General Introduction to the Series by JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.
- The Best Plays of Thomas Otway. Introduction and Notes by the Hon. RODEN NOEL.
- The Complete Plays of William Congreve. Edited by ALEX. C. EWALD.
- The Complete Plays of Richard Steele. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by G. A. AITKEN.
- The Best Plays of Ben Jonson. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by BRINSLEY NICHOLSON and C. H. HERFORD. 3 vols.
- The Best Plays of James Shirley. With Introduction by EDMUND GOSSE.
- The Best Plays of Thomas Shadwell. Edited by GEORGE SAINTSBURY.
- The Complete Plays of William Wycherley. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by W. C. WARD.
- The Best Plays of John Ford. Edited by HAVELOCK ELLIS.
- The Best Plays of Webster and Tourneur. With an Introduction and Notes, by JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.
- The Best Plays of Thomas Heywood. Edited by A. W. VERITY. With Introduction by J. A. SYMONDS.
- The Best Plays of John Dryden. Edited by GEORGE SAINTSBURY. 2 vols.
- The Best Plays of Thomas Middleton. With an Introduction by ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE. 2 vols.
- Nero and other Plays. Edited by H. P. HORNE, ARTHUR SYMONS, A. W. VERITY, and H. ELLIS.
- The Best Plays of Thomas Dekker. Notes by ERNEST RHYS.
- The Best Plays of Philip Massinger. With Critical and Biographical Essays and Notes by ARTHUR SYMONS. 2 vols.
- The Best Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. With Introduction and Notes by J. St LOE STRACHEY. 2 vols.
- The Best Plays of George Chapman. Edited by WILLIAM LYON PHELPS.
- The Select Plays of Sir John Vanbrugh. Edited, with an Introduction and Notes, by A. E. H. SWAIN.

THE TIMES, 20th November 1903, in a Review of a column and a quarter, says—

"Mr Fisher Unwin is re-issuing his 'Mermaid Series' of Old Dramatists in a very attractive form. The volumes are light in the hand and will go easily into the pocket; they are printed in clear type on thin paper; ideal companions for the student who seeks his pleasure where the Saint found it, 'in angulo cum libello.'"

THE PALL MALL GAZETTE says—

"It is impossible to let the completion of this re-issue go by without congratulating every one concerned, including the reader, on the possibility of obtaining the cream of Eng' and s' dramatic literature in this convenient form."

T. FISHER UNWIN, Publisher, 1, Adelphi Terrace, London, W.C.

